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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



March 2012

Vol. 117, No. 3





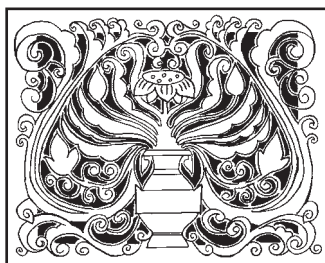
# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

Vol. 117, No. 3  
March 2012

## Contents



Amrita Kalasha

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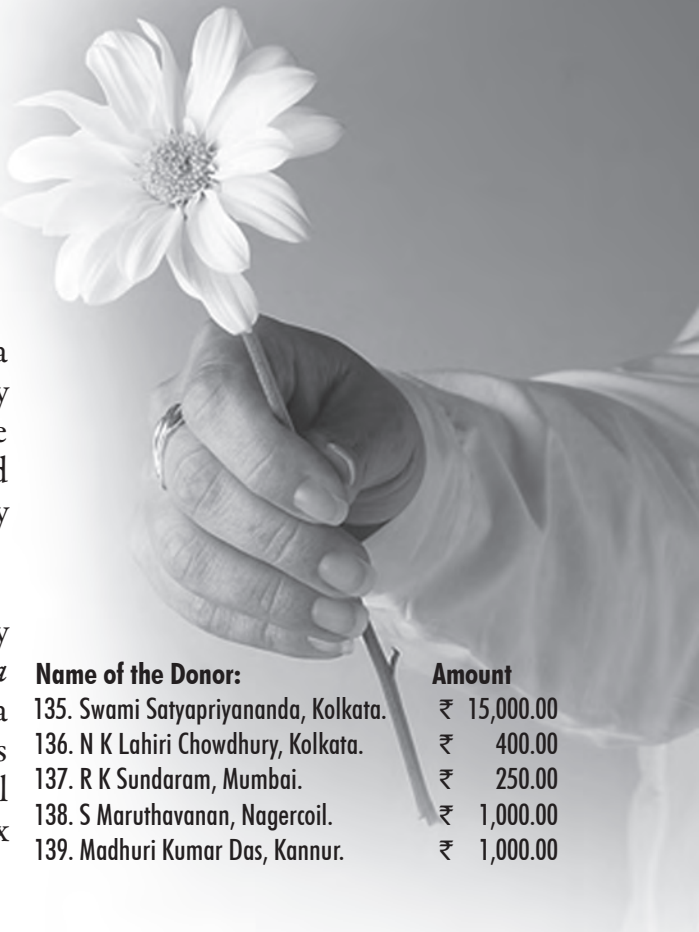
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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*



## *Splendour Inside the Body*

March 2012  
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आत्मानं चेद्विजानीयादयमस्मीति पूरुषः ।  
किमिच्छन्कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत् ॥

If a person knows the Self as 'I am this', then desiring what and for whose sake will he suffer in the wake of the body?

*(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.4.12)*

पुरमेकादशद्वारमजस्यावक्रचेतसः ।  
अनुष्ठाय न शोचति विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते । एतद्वै तत् ॥

Of the unborn One, whose consciousness is unflickering, there is a city [body] with eleven gates. Meditating (on that) one does not grieve and, becoming freed, one obtains emancipation. This indeed is that.

*(Katha Upanishad, 2.2.1)*

एषोऽणुरात्मा चेतसा वेदितव्यो यस्मिन्प्राणः पञ्चधा संविवेश ।  
प्राणैश्चित्तं सर्वमोतं प्रजानां यस्मिन्विशुद्धे विभवत्येष आत्मा ॥

Within the body, where the vital force has entered in five forms, is this subtle Self, to be realized through that intelligence by which is pervaded the entire mind as well as the motor and sensory organs of all creatures. And It is to be known in the mind, which having become purified, this Self reveals Itself distinctly.

*(Mundaka Upanishad, 3.1.9)*

सर्वाजीवे सर्वसंस्थे बृहन्ते अस्मिन् हंसो भ्राम्यते ब्रह्मचक्रे ।  
पृथगात्मानं प्रेरितारं च मत्वा जुष्टस्ततस्तेनामृतत्वमेति ॥

The jiva, considering itself and the Controller as different, revolves in this great wheel of Brahman, which is the sustenance and dissolution of all. When adored (as identified) with Him (God), then thereby one attains immortality.

*(Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 1.6.)*

# THIS MONTH

Humankind has explored and dominated every environment through the unique instrument of self-consciousness. Today this key is being employed to open the doors of **The Kingdom Within**.

The concept of womanhood is undergoing a paradigm shift because women are empowering themselves. Prof. Sati Chatterjee, chairperson of the Kolkata branch of All India Women's Conference, speaks of **Women, Spirituality, and Empowerment**.



India is home to innumerable major and minor linguistic groups that have coexisted and thrived for centuries. Prof. Rajnath Bhat, Department of Linguistics, Banaras Hindu University, explores the **Phonology of Indic Languages**.



Cinema is a mechanical reproduction of life that has a big impact on society. Dr Arup Ratan Ghosh, dramatist, filmmaker, author, and teacher from Kolkata, gives us a glimpse of cinema's influence in **Camera as Mirror, Society as Screen**.

**Svarajya Siddhibi: Attaining Self-dominion** is a treatise that introduces and elaborates certain aspects of Advaita Vedanta. The author Gangadharendra Saraswati, was the fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram.

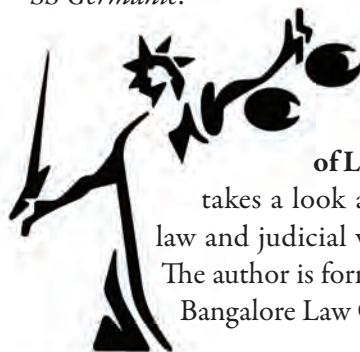
The original text is translated and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda of the Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata.

Swami Bhajanananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, in the second part of **Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – V** coherently explains how today's unprecedented spiritual movements are changing our views on religion and spirituality.

In the third part of **Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons** Swami Tathagatananda, head of the Vedanta Society of New York, makes known how Mother's love transcends time, place, and circumstances and touches all kinds of people.



In the fourth part of **Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels** Somenath Mukherjee, Researcher, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, presents Swamiji's travels on the *SS Germanic*.



In the final part of **An Enquiry into the Strength of Law** Prof. N L Mitra takes a look at the rationale of law and judicial vs tribunal justice. The author is former director of the Bangalore Law College.



# *The Kingdom Within*

**T**WO WORDS CAN, to a certain extent, summarize humankind's long journey from the hazy distant past: exploration and domination. Humans have explored and dominated every environment and species on earth. How physically weak humans accomplish this feat is no longer a mystery. From the first inarticulate sounds and searching looks of a baby, humans have searched for answers to quench their insatiable thirst to learn and know. But the most fascinating study that has engaged humankind down the ages has been humankind itself. The subject studying the subject through the object! Swami Vivekananda says: 'Every motion is in a circle. If you can take up a stone, and project it into space, and then live long enough, that stone, if it meets with no obstruction, will come back exactly to your hand. A straight line, infinitely projected must end in a circle.' Similarly, every human endeavour and study has reflected knowledge and skills back and revealed more about ourselves. This has been our power, our life, our destiny, and our salvation.

The most complexly organized matter in the world is the human brain. It has helped manifest the unique self-consciousness that makes us aware of our mental states and gives the ability to discern and interpret others. To use an analogy, we can reflect what we know and perceive within the mirror of the self, evaluate ourselves and others, and also project it outside. This ability has given us the enormous power that has transmuted communication. Phonetics

is converted into the alphabet that gives rise to language and writing, which has helped fortify human exploration and domination. Self-consciousness, apart from conferring the understanding of cognition, emotional states, and behavioural modes, has endowed us with self-love. We are in love with ourselves. This self-love reaches far beyond mere survival and self-propagation and has put us in a very different class of beings. Self-love is not to be confused with narcissism, egomania, or selfishness, because these are unnatural and aberrations. Self-love is a very distinct level; for whatever has consciousness has also the quality of love.

As if the whole world is not enough to explore and dominate, humans are reaching the limits of space and time, and the search is revealing even more of our nature. Today we are conscious that we are made from the very stuff that makes the universe, and our limits have become universal. All the ancient myths and legends about humanity are slowly coming true. Swamiji says: 'According to the Jews and Mohammedans, God created man after creating the angels and everything else, and after creating man He asked the angels to come and salute him, and all did so except Iblis; so God cursed him and he became Satan. Behind this allegory is the great truth that this human birth is the greatest birth we can have.' And in an inspired mood Swamiji continues: 'This human body is the greatest body in the universe, and a human being the greatest being. Man is higher than all the animals, than all the angels; none is greater than man. Even the Devas (gods) will

have to come down again and attain to salvation through a human body.’

The religious history of India declares that God frequently descends as an avatara, becomes a human being, and behaves like one. Sri Ramakrishna went through many spiritual experiences that covered the entire range of the spiritual world. This was possible because he had built a deep relationship with the Divine, but in his mature years he was commanded by that Divinity to establish a relationship with humans. Sri Ramakrishna says: ‘Once in a spiritual mood, I felt intense love for Jagannath [Lord of the Universe], love such as a woman feels for her sweetheart. In that mood I was about to embrace Him, when I broke my arm. It was then revealed to me: “You have assumed this human body. Therefore establish with human beings the relationship of friends, father, mother, or son.”’

Many people speak of religion as a relic from the past; however, this can never be true, because as long as there is self-consciousness there will be the world and also God. This triad is indissoluble and permanent. To understand human beings and the world perfectly one must have God. Every study that has discarded the God factor has made humankind, with all its knowledge and love, incomplete. Instead of showing the real nature of a human being as divine, studies have labelled humans as mysterious, complex, and driven by subconscious urges, and the world as ruled by uncertainty and probability. Bring in the element of God and everything becomes perfect. Swamiji says: ‘I remember a story told by Prof. Max Müller in one of his books, an old Greek story, of how a Brahmin visited Socrates in Athens. The Brahmin asked, “What is the highest knowledge?” And Socrates answered, “To know man is the end and aim of all knowledge.” “But how can you know man without

knowing God?” replied the Brahmin. The one side, the Greek side, which is represented by modern Europe, insisted upon the knowledge of man; the Indian side, mostly represented by the old religions of the world, insisted upon the knowledge of God.’ This triad is called in Ved-anta *jiva-jagat-Ishvara*, soul-nature-God.

Self-consciousness and self-love are a reflection of a higher state of existence. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, after the rishi Yajnavalkya was declared the best knower of Brahman in a debate at the court of King Janaka by the Vedic pundits, he in turn, in conclusion, put a question to all present: ‘From what root indeed does man spring forth after he is cut off by death?’ Everyone remained silent. The Upanishad then declares the root: ‘*Vijnanam-anandam brahma*; Consciousness-Bliss Brahman.’ And further adds: ‘The supreme goal of the dispenser of wealth [sacrificer], as well of him who has realized Brahman and lives in It.’ This absolute Consciousness is reflected in humans as self-consciousness, and Bliss is reflected as love. The absolute Brahman is the root of the triad. It is from Brahman that everything rises and merges and is linked. Each one reflects the other two: humans reflect the world and God; God is reflected in humans and the world; and the world and humankind is a reflection, or creation, of God. Eliminate one and the other two also disappear.

This is our real kingdom, and we have been going around like paupers because we have forgotten this central truth within. We have to explore self-consciousness to attain our kingdom. Swamiji, in his mature years, says: ‘After so much austerity I have understood this as the real truth—God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that.’ Pausing for a while and turning to his disciple he says further: ‘What I have told you today, inscribe in your heart. See that you do not forget it.’





## ***Women, Spirituality, and Empowerment***

**Prof. Sati Chatterjee**

**I**F WE BEGIN OUR DELIBERATIONS with the term ‘empowerment’, we shall find two levels of connotation central to the present discourse on women and spirituality. The term ‘power’ in the present context means a legal institutionally recognized authority. It is in this sense we speak about empowerment of women or empowerment of deprived and weak groups in society. The second connotation of the term ‘power’ refers to inner strength, latent potency, the power that is inherent in nature—like the power in the wind, flowing water, lightning, and thunder—and independent of institutional recognition.

Keeping in mind these two levels of meaning

the term ‘empowerment’ at the primary level may be understood as to hand out legal rights, to officially recognize through legislation, the right to act, to participate in, to take decisions, and so on. At the second level the term may be interpreted as a process of drawing out, awakening, and activating the latent power in any individual or group. Empowerment at the first level is formal, external, and on the surface, as demonstrated in India, for instance, in the pro-women legislation and in recent reservation of seats in panchayats and the Parliament. If these two levels are combined, we would have true empowerment, not only in the case of women but for any underprivileged group.



### **Empowerment in Democracy**

Before proceeding we must note one point: empowerment at the primary level, with all its pragmatic urgency, presents a paradox in the context of democracy that ensures equal rights to one and all. Notionally speaking, democracy harbours no powerful and powerless position in its system. The very idea of ‘empowering’ some individuals or groups assumes the assertion that some others possess power and from them power might be doled out to the helpless. Democracy, again, decrees no such positioning, no such privilege. Who gives? Who receives?

Empowerment entails providing opportunities for education, work, policy-making, self-sufficiency—opportunities that help develop a cultural, national, and socioeconomic identity in order to participate in social reconstruction and nation building. This is the minimal level of self-fulfilment for any individual in society. The very need to strive for empowering others is a clear indicator of an underdeveloped stage of democracy in which millions are kept below the minimal human requirements. In India the struggle for empowerment has to be organized, sustained, and intensified. Regarding women empowerment, it should comprise all levels, from the female foetus’s right to be born to women representation in the Parliament.

### **Spirituality is Innate**

Spirituality is innate in human nature. Irrespective of gender, varna, degrees of learning, and material prosperity, human beings yearn to reach beyond mortal limits. The poet Keats spoke of ‘bursting our mortal bars’.<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore waited for the time when ‘human beings would cross mortal limits’. This reaching beyond, rising above, the urge to press forward, is a common human inheritance, inalienable I believe, innate as the wind that blows over the earth and

the flash of lightning in the sky. Human nature harbours this urge, however muted it might be.

Though gender discrimination has also been operative in the sphere of religious practices in India’s social systems, practising religious rituals and responding to spiritual aspirations are entirely different things. Rituals are social constructs, their performance controlled by centres of power, priests, or rulers. The writers of religious social codes—Manu, Yajnavalkya, Parashara, and others—had decreed that the religious practice of women is taking care of the home. Marriage and joining the husband’s family had been equated with *upanayana*, sacred-thread investiture, and *guru-griha-vasa*, staying in the home of the guru. Taking proper care of the family and the home, bearing and raising children—particularly male ones—has been prescribed as the true path of religion for women and has been equated with the higher pursuits, *vedachara*, Vedic way of life. The dwarfing process extended to barring women’s access to higher knowledge, formal education, and participation in public affairs and treating them as man’s domestic possession. The long period of decadence stretched from the time of the writers of religious social codes to the beginning of the nineteenth century—one of the ridiculous ideas kept in circulation then was that if women learnt English, they would lose their husbands and become widows.

The picture, we must remember, has been entirely different in the glorious period of ancient Indian civilization, during Vedic and Upanishadic times. In one of the creation myths, the Creator divides himself equally into two halves, producing the male and female. No gender privileging is noticed there. Composers of the hymns in the Rig Veda include women rishis such as Ghosha, Apala, Vak, and so on. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Gargi, the daughter of rishi Vachaknu, evaluates the great illumined

sages in the assembly of King Janaka and decides who is the greatest among them. The Maitreyi-Yajnavalkya dialogue, also in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, is one of the sublime expositions of Upanishadic metaphysics—the Vedantic concept of the one in the many. The enquiring mind, we note, is that of a woman.

The questions Maitreyi raises reflect the essence of the spiritual urge and bring us to the realm of pure spirituality. The sage Yajnavalkya decides to adopt the life of sannyasa and distributes his property between his two wives; Katyayani remains unperturbed, while Maitreyi asks the sage: ‘Sir, if indeed this whole earth full of wealth be mine, shall I be immortal through that or not?’<sup>2</sup> The sage replies: ‘No, your life will be just like that of people who possess plenty of things, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth’ (ibid). Maitreyi rejects the estate and seeks truth.

This is the higher aspiration. The word ‘aspiration’ comes from the Latin root *spirare*, meaning ‘breathe’; ‘aspiration’ is not affected by the gender factor or by any other quotidian-biological factor either. Living icons of recent times are the young princess Mira, who renounced everything out of love for Sri Krishna, and Sri Sarada Devi, a village woman who assured Sri Ramakrishna all support in his spiritual sadhana—a barely literate woman whose advice the great Swami Vivekananda accepted as supreme. These lives reveal a different dimension of the human mind; here we come across another kind of power, a power that emanates from within. This is power that cannot be given through legislation.

### Unfolding the Human Potential

Can this inner spiritual potential be accessed through activist programmes? Deep spirituality is like a mystery beyond pragmatic planning. It is a completely different realm. Only Sri Ramakrishna was able to monitor the spiritual level

of Swami Vivekananda. On the other hand, the effort to empower people through activist programmes must not be given up because the exploited, who are totally engaged in their existential struggles, cannot direct their energies to higher goals. Swamiji, in one of his letters to Swami Ramakrishnananda, writes: ‘Did not our Gurudeva use to say, “An empty stomach is no good for religion?”’<sup>3</sup>

All through the decadent years of India it was the urge for spirituality that kept the impoverished masses in tune with everything humane and gave them tremendous forbearance. Over and over Swamiji says that the masses have religion enough, what they need is bread. We can only touch the inner spirit of millions of *daridra bharatvasi*, poor Indians, through love and by giving them opportunities. We have the mistaken notion that they are very weak and have to be helped at every step. We just need to open a few doors and they will work their way up. They respond to the touch of loving sympathy—not political propaganda, not administrative bureaucracy, not mechanical bookish programmes of social welfare activism. Programmes must be sensitized. As the recipients open, the message penetrates and touches the inner spring of life.

Activist programmes are intended to develop ‘awareness’ among the underprivileged at many levels. The effort need not begin at the top level of the spiritual discourse; it should rather start at the basic level of daily life and then proceed upwards. In a holistic perspective consciousness is perceived as resting on many supportive levels, ranging from the sheer physical to the purely spiritual, from the *anna-maya kosha* to the *ananda-maya kosha*. The advice is ‘*annam na nindyat*; do not insult food’<sup>4</sup>; never neglect the physical, never look down on it. The Shvetaketu episode in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* illustrates the idea that the subtlest ingredient of




'Namaz',  
by S G Thakur Singh  
(1940)

food eaten imparts energy to the mind.<sup>5</sup>

If we keep this in mind and attune our 'empowering' programmes accordingly, we can arouse and draw out, slowly but surely, the higher self. If, for instance, we let the deprived ones know and notice that the struggle for basic needs is only the first step at the lowest end, they would learn to distinguish between the lower and the higher, learn to look beyond the requirements for physical survival towards higher fulfilment.

My activist experience assures that we can appeal to the higher self within those we try to empower, even though they are victims of illiteracy or are living in slums and shanties. We can lead them from lower motivation to higher motivation, from asking them to shout slogans to offering genuine gestures, from immediate interests of

daily needs to other lofty interests. Empowerment in this sense is a continuous process, an enabling effort that takes the entire range of human existence and human potential. This, or at least something close to this, should be the objective in our attempts at 'empowerment'—if we truly care. 

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# Phonology of Indic Languages

Prof. Rajnath Bhat

India remains one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. Apart from its many religions and sects, India is home to innumerable castes and tribes, as well as to more than a dozen major and hundreds of minor linguistic groups from several language families unrelated to one another.<sup>1</sup>

EVERY EXISTING LANGUAGE has evolved through thousands of years and is inextricably connected with a particular people, their culture, and conception of the world. In this article we shall look at the phonology of languages found in India. Phonology is the study of complex contrasting relationship between speech sounds. It involves an understanding of articulatory, laryngeal, and acoustic characteristics of segmental and supra-segmental phonemes of human languages. India is a tableau of languages and cultures, and one comes across a striking richness of sound-systems in Indic languages.

The presence of stops, fricatives, affricates, laterals, approximants, and so on is attested across Indic languages, but retroflexion, which is quite predominant in northern, central, and southern India, is absent from most north-eastern languages. Voiced stops too are not used in some languages of the north-eastern region; a comparable situation is encountered in Tamil, where voicing of the stop consonant occurs in inter-vocalic position. Some languages of the north-eastern region employ voiceless laterals and nasals, labialized consonants, a series of consonant clusters, apico-alveolar affricates, and central high vowels, besides register or contour tones—the latter are widespread in the north-east.

## Contrast and Similarity of Sounds

Tone, which is widespread among the north-eastern languages of India, is also attested in Punjabi, Pahari, Dogri, and Haryanavi—a regional Hindi dialect—in North India. Vedic Sanskrit allowed three pitches: *udata*, high; *anudata*, low; and *svarita*, level, which are meticulously recorded in Sanskrit texts and treatises on *shiksha*, phonetics, and *pratishakhyā*, phonology. Punjabi and its neighbouring languages in North India allow three tones: rising, falling, and level. The languages of the north-east exhibit remarkable variation and richness in their tone assignment; there are register as well as contour tones in them: high, low, level, rising, falling, high rising, low rising, high falling, and low falling. These languages allow two tones on disyllabic lexical items.

Lamkang, spoken in forty-five localities of the Chandel district in Manipur and adjoining localities in Myanmar, allows such consonant clusters as: mk, kt<sup>h</sup>, rt<sup>h</sup>l, t<sup>h</sup>, mc<sup>h</sup>, nt<sup>h</sup>, kt, rj, rn, rl, pt, tr, pc<sup>h</sup>, and kt, kʔk in word medial and word-initial positions.

Monsang, spoken in the same district mentioned above—though in fewer localities and by lesser number of speakers as compared to Lamkang—has two distinct varieties as far as its tonal structures are concerned. Monsang employs voiceless counterparts of the nasals ‘m’ and ‘n’, and voiceless counterparts of the lateral and tap ‘l’ and ‘r’. Monsang has the distinction of employing the unrounded counterpart of the mid-back-rounded vowel as well. Labialization of a few consonants is prominent in this language. The central high

vowel, so frequently used in several languages of the north-east, is not present in Monsang.

Secondary articulation is predominant in northern languages, for instance Kashmiri, as well as in some north-eastern languages. In the former one comes across palatalization, whereas labialization is noticeable in a few languages of the north-east, for instance Monsang. Palatalization is also an important feature of Konkani, spoken mainly in Goa, western India. Rhotacism—the tendency to pronounce ‘d’ and ‘l’ as ‘r’—is noticed in a few languages of the north-east, for instance in Mao-Naga. Pharyngealization—modification into a pharyngeal sound—of the bilabial nasal ‘m’ is noticed in a couple of north-eastern languages; the segment usually occurs in the word-initial position and it is invariably syllabic.

Long, short, and nasalized vowels are almost a pan-Indian feature. However, vowel length is not phonemic everywhere; Bangla, for example, does not phonemicize vowel length.

Aspiration is another important feature that has a wider presence in Indian idioms. Aspiration is predominantly associated with stops and affricates, but some languages or dialects aspirate nasals, laterals, and trills/taps as well. This is found in Maithili and the dialects of Hindi, from Magahi in Bihar to Rajasthani in Rajasthan, including Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Brajbhasha. Standard Hindi and several of its varieties aspirate the cerebral flap ‘R’ too.

Trilling is remarkably noticeable in several languages and dialects across the subcontinent; for instance, southern languages and Bundeli—a dialect of Hindi.

Stop consonants usually have aspirated and voiced counterparts across Indic languages—a few in the southern region, like Tamil, and some in the north-east are exceptions, as in them the voiced stops are allophonic to voiceless stops, and

aspiration is totally absent. Those north-eastern languages that phonemicize voiced and voiceless stops also have aspirated counterparts of the voiceless stops. The aspirated counterpart of the voiced stops, so common elsewhere in Indic languages, is present only in Axomiya—Assamese—in the north-east. The absence of retroflex/cerebral series of stops in a significantly large number of languages spoken in the north-east is quite noteworthy; these languages have bilabial, alveolar, and velar series of stops and alveolar and palatal series of affricates. Axomiya in the north-east also has only three series of stop consonants: bilabial, alveolar, and velar. Axomiya is the only language in India that phonemicizes the uvular fricative ‘x’ and the glottal voiced ‘H’. Thus, Indic languages have stop and affricate consonants as follows:

Bilabial stops: p, {p<sup>h</sup>, b}, (b<sup>h</sup>)  
 Alveolar/dental stops: t, {t<sup>h</sup>, d}, (d<sup>h</sup>)  
 Retroflex/cerebral stops: Ṭ, {Ṭ<sup>h</sup>, Ḍ}, (Ḍ<sup>h</sup>)  
 Palatal affricates: c, {c<sup>h</sup>, j}, (j<sup>h</sup>)  
 Alveolar affricates: {ts, {ts<sup>h</sup>, dz}, (dz<sup>h</sup>)  
 Labio-dental affricates: (pf, bv)  
 Velar stops: k, {k<sup>h</sup>, g}, (g<sup>h</sup>)  
 Uvular stop: ‘/q/’

The segments within braces { } are not present in several languages of the north-east and in a few of the south. The segments within parenthesis ( ) are not present in a large number of languages of northern, central, and north-eastern India and of a few southern Indian languages.

The cerebral/retroflex series of stops is not attested anywhere in north-eastern India. The uvular stop ‘/q/’ is confined to standard Urdu and standard Sindhi. The palatal series of affricates is found across the subcontinent, but the alveolar series of affricates is scattered in the north, like Kashmiri; in the west, like Marathi and Konkani; and in the north-east too. Axomiya does

not employ affricates at all. Mao-Naga in the north-east employs a special set of labio-dental affricates—‘pf’ and ‘bv’—that predominantly occur at the beginning of a word.

The fricatives in Indic languages are the bilabial ‘f’; the alveolar ‘s’, ‘z’; the retroflex/cerebral ‘ʃ’, ‘ʒ’; the palatal ‘ʃ’; the uvular ‘x’; and the glottal ‘h’, ‘hʰ’. The bilabial fricative ‘f’ is specific to Konkani and standard Urdu. The uvular ‘x’ is confined to Axomiya, standard Urdu, and standard Sindhi. The cerebral ‘ʃ’, ‘ʒ’ are attested in a few northern languages and were used in Vedic Sanskrit. The rhotacized ‘ʃ’ is employed in a few north-eastern languages. The uvular ‘x’ and the voiced ‘hʰ’ are phonemic in Axomiya. The alveolar ‘s’, the palatal ‘ʃ’, and the glottal ‘h’ are phonemic across India. The alveolar ‘z’ is quite prominent in some northern languages like Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi, Urdu, standard Hindi, eastern Sindhi, and several languages of the north-east.

The presence of the bilabial and the alveolar nasals ‘m’ and ‘n’ is attested across Indic languages. Standard Hindi phonemicizes cerebral/retroflex nasal ‘Ṇ’ as well, and the palatal and the velar nasals are allophones of the alveolar nasal in Hindi. The cerebral nasal is in use in Odishi too. Malayalam distinguishes between the dental and the alveolar series of stops including the nasal consonant. Most of the north-eastern languages phonemicize the velar nasal in addition to the bilabial and the alveolar nasals. The phonemic velar nasal occurs at the beginning of a word too. A few languages in the north, like Punjabi and Dogri, phonemicize the five nasal consonants: bilabial, alveolar, cerebral, palatal, and velar. A similar situation can be encountered in Tamil. The labio-dental nasal ‘Ṃ’ is reportedly present in some languages of the north-east, like Mao-Naga.

The alveolar lateral ‘l’ and the alveolar tap/trill ‘r’ have a pan-Indian presence. The cerebral/retroflex ‘ɻ’ is phonemic in several southern

languages like Tamil, northern languages like Punjabi and Dogri, and in at least one language spoken in east India—Odishi—including a couple of varieties/dialects of Hindi—Rajasthani, Haryanvi. Hindi and several of its varieties/dialects employ cerebral flaps ‘R’ and ‘Rʰ’. Sindhi uses implosives, whereas Khasi reportedly employs ejectives. The approximants ‘w’ and ‘y’ have a pan-Indian use. Tamil and Malayalam also employ a palatal approximant.

The foregoing description provides important and rich information about the presence of consonant segments, tones, and secondary articulatory mechanisms attested in Indic languages. Indian students of phonology can easily appreciate a specific articulatory mechanism or the assignment of any tone.

The vowel inventory in India is equally rich. There are front, central, and back vowels across the language spectrum. The front and central vowels are usually unrounded, so is the back low vowel, and the back vowels—mid-low upwards—are by and large rounded. The front vowels *I*, *e*, *ⁱe*, and *a* are unrounded. The central vowels *I*, *E*, and *ⁱ* too are unrounded. The back vowels *u*, *o*, and *ⁱ* are rounded, but the back low *A* is unrounded.

Monsang in the north-east uses the unrounded counterpart of the mid-back ‘O’. It must be noted that all Indic languages do not use vowels at four tongue heights; many use only three: high, middle, and low.

Length and nasalization impact vowels in all Indic languages, but these features are not universally phonemic in Indic languages—Bangla does not phonemicize vowel length.

The central high vowel ‘ɪ’ is widespread in the north-east, and it is also in use in Kashmiri and several languages spoken in the Ladakh region, the upper reaches of the Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim.

(Continued on page 177)





## Camera as Mirror, Society as Screen

Dr Arup Ratan Ghosh

CINEMA IS A KIND OF global mirror because it is a mechanical reproduction of our times and lives. The history of cinema takes us through the merriment, tears, torments, violence, and aesthetic pleasure of different strata of society. Human imagination, creativity, and ideals are reflected on the cinema screen. Cinema is a mirror of society and in turn society assimilates the mirage of cinema—and the masses toss amidst this hall of mirrors.

Ever since motion picture technology became current in the late 1890s cinema has made a deep impact on people's lives, in addition to widening their mental horizon. The masters of filmmaking say:

Only cinema can narrate History with a capital H simply by telling its own history, the other arts can't ... because it's made from the same raw material as History. ... Cinema is much more the image of the century in all its aspects than some little novel; it's the century's metaphor. ... Its raw material is metaphorical in itself. Its reality is already metaphorical. ... In a place where it is in the living present, cinema addresses them

simply: it reports them; it's the registrar of History. ... And if the right scientific research were done afterwards it would be a social support; it wouldn't neglect the social side.<sup>1</sup>

When cinema records history, it allows the visual interpretation of history to reveal events untold in written history. In the words of a philosopher: 'If the cinema goes beyond perception, it is in the sense that it reaches to the *genetic element* of all possible perception, that is, the point which changes, and which makes perception change, the differential of perception itself.'<sup>2</sup> Motion pictures exploit the 'persistence of vision' in the human brain, and over the last century technology has advanced to unbelievable limits making motion pictures and cinema a highly specialized field. Cinema thus touches the root of our perception, interpretation, and understanding of the world. That is why the image on the screen leaves a deep impression on the mind, influencing our behaviour and tastes. In this article we will try to catch a glimpse of cinema's impression on society and the reflection of society on the screen. Our focus will be Indian films, especially Hindi ones, though we

will refer to films outside India as well.

### **Mythology and Philosophy in Cinema**

Mythology, epics, and traditional lore have been engines of human mental development in all cultures down the ages. Cinema, based on these themes and sometimes with a contemporary perspective, form part of early cinematic history. *Raja Harishchandra*, *The Mahabharata*, *Jai Santoshi Ma* (Hindi), *Baba Taraknath* (Bengali), *Laila Majnu* (Hindi), and *Anantyaatra* (Hindi) belong to this genre. The Marathi films *Tukaram*, *Jnaneshwar*, and *Namdev* left a deep mark on many people and inspired them to a higher life; and so did the films on the lives of Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, and Madhvacharya. The singer-saint Mira Bai has been portrayed on screen in many Indian languages, the one enacted by M S Subbulakshmi in Hindi being arguably the best. *The Ramayana* gripped every section of society with its sublime philosophy and strong characters. *Bal Hanuman*, *Bal Ganesh*, and *My Friend Ganesh* are some of the recent movies in Hindi that have brought animated mythological stories to children. Legendary stories about rulers have been also cinematized in films like *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* in Malayalam.

Most of the films are a result of the study of literature, historical research, imagination, and juxtaposition of commercial elements to lure average moviegoers. In India the next stage of popular cinema incorporated myth with contemporary life, like in *Devi* (Bengali) by Satyajit Ray. A few other films just hinted at myth and brought forth their own contemporary revelation; *Anantyaatra* was one such film, in which Shankuntala wearing a bodice comes out of the closet of a magician and explores the daily life of the 1990s. Myth and reality is wonderfully related in *Subarnarekha* (Bengali) by Ritwik Ghatak, which is a kind of modern Ramayana focusing on Sita—the story is

about a refugee girl and her elder brother searching for a new home. *Rajneeti* (Hindi) by Prakash Jha employs motifs from the Mahabharata to depict modern-day politics; the characters assume the personalities of Krishna, Arjuna, and Karna, albeit in the modern context. Cinema, particularly in India, has had religious elements since its beginning. A scholar says: 'As old as the cinema itself is its relationship—or more accurately, relationships—with religion.'<sup>3</sup>

Philosophy also has been portrayed in cinema. *The Legend of Bagger Vance* recreates the setting of the Bhagavadgita on a golf course! *The Matrix* series tries to depict abstruse concepts of Indian philosophy through the usual good versus evil story. The presence of the Creator was the theme of the movies *Oh, God!*, *Bruce Almighty*, and *Evan Almighty*. *Dogma* depicts a fallen angel trying to find his way home. Millenarian beliefs have led to movies depicting the destruction of the world like *Independence Day*, 2012, *Armageddon*, *The Day after Tomorrow*, and *Apocalypse*. *Adjustment Bureau* and *Cape Karma* (Hindi) explore the ramifications of the theory of karma.

### **Reflecting an Afflicted Society**

Some films portray society realistically, while others do it under the veneer of entertainment. Though the screen makes things real, it does so mostly in a dreamlike environment. The great filmmaker Ingmar Bergman says: 'When cinematography is at its best, it is very close to the state of dreaming. You know, in any other art you can't create a situation that is as close to dreaming. Think only of the time gap. You can make things as long as you want, exactly as in a dream. You can make things as short as you want, exactly as in a dream. As a director, a creator of the picture, you are like a dreamer.'<sup>4</sup>

Some films carry broad social messages like friendship, as in *Dost* (Hindi), and the need for

family values, as in the Hindi films *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* and *Baghban*. Films portraying the struggles of common persons are popular due to obvious reasons. *Bicycle Thieves* by Vittorio De Sica mirrors the struggle for existence of common people. In search of his stolen bicycle, a poor man goes to different corners of an Italian town where his bicycle could have been spotted. Through his cinema, De Sica shows the naturalistic reflection of the world of the downtrodden.

In Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajita*, and *Apur Sansar* (Bengali) we find a naturalistic image of erstwhile Bengal. People with their moods, societal and political milieu, and stream of life are recreated brilliantly. Ritwik Ghatak, however, unveils the sensibility of Bengal in his films, which are rhythmic beats of his times—1950s to 1970s. Mrinal Sen's *Chorus*, *Calcutta 71*, *Akaler Shandhaney*, and *Parashuram* are related to social issues like poverty, exploitation, and unemployment.

A galaxy of brilliant filmmakers created films with a bold treatment of sociopolitical issues of exploitation, which were labelled 'middle' or 'parallel' cinema. With their strong message for awakening sociopolitical consciousness and kindling protests, some films in this genre deeply influenced viewers. Parallel cinema also destroyed the established notions of glamour, stardom, and cinema as mere entertainment.

Commercial filmmakers like Raj Kapoor and others with 'feel good' recipes belong to the category of entertainment cinema, aimed chiefly at the masses. Such cinema with a cocktail of social, emotional, and human values is an escape into a different world, hence successful and popular. *Sholay* marked a paradigm shift in the making of Indian movies, and often Indian cinema is seen in two periods: before and after *Sholay*. It brought home the theme of rehabilitating prisoners artistically and it also became a commercial success.

This led to the possibility of portraying social issues in films that were commercially viable.

The Hindi film *Gangajal* is based on a true incident and brought out the ills of the police and the political system with its criminal nexus. *Rang De Basanti* (Hindi) depicted the frequent crashes of the fighter aircraft MIG-21. This film was very popular with the youth and raised their spirit of patriotism. It also brought about a social movement demanding the stopping of the operations of the particular aircraft in the Indian Air Force. Some other movies like *Swadesh* and *Chak De India* kindle the spirit of teamwork and patriotism. The latter has been widely screened by various corporate houses to motivate employees. *Lage Raho Munnabhai* influenced society to adopt innovative non-violent means to persuade and win over enemies, as the film shows an imaginary encounter of the protagonist with Mahatma Gandhi.

Madhur Bhandarkar tackles specific social issues in his Hindi films. In *Chandni Bar* he depicts the pitiable lives of the barroom dancers of Mumbai, and in *Aan: Men at Work* the difficult lives of Indian policemen. While *Page 3* exposes the inner world of print media, *Fashion* gives an unsavoury glimpse of the fashion world. *Jail* shows the inhumane treatment of prisoners and *Traffic Signal* reveals the livelihoods connected with the Indian road traffic signals. *Corporate* shows the dirty politics of the corporate world and *Dil Toh Baccha Hai Ji* depicts the need for and pitfalls of human relationships. Similarly, many films showing modern social and family problems have been dealt with in almost all regional languages in India with great success.

The lives of famous persons have been the subject of many films: *Gandhi* by Richard Attenborough, and *Malcom X* by Spike Lee were stunning portrayals. Films based on historical figures and incidents, like *Bhagat Singh*, *Mangal*



*Pandey, La Vita è Bella* (Italian), *Schindler's List*, *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Pathirakolapathakathinte Katha* (Malayalam), are popular.

When the psyche of society changes, the meta-narratives of ethics fade away, and the distinction between the hero and the villain blur, once again the screen reflected society in the Hindi film *Baazigar*, in which the hero was an anti-hero. Complex relationships outside the conventional ones are portrayed in Hindi films like *Kabhi Kabhi, Silsila*, *36 Chowringhee Lane*, and *Salaam Namaste*. The critically acclaimed Greek movie *Kynodontas* also belongs to this genre.

Love has been a common theme for countless films, but only some are original, like *Casablanca*, *You've Got Mail*, *When Harry Met Sally*, *No Strings Attached*, and Hindi films like *Maine Pyar Kiya*, *Dil Se*, *I Hate Luv Storys*, and *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*. There have been many films dealing with psychological disorders like *Psycho*, *Karthik Calling Karthik* (Hindi), *Murder 2* (Hindi), *Manichitrathazhu* (Malayalam), and *Nadunisi Naigal* (Tamil). In the science fiction category *Womb* and *Endhiran* (Tamil) deal with the ethical dilemmas of a technology-dependent society. Some films like *Philadelphia* and Hindi films like *My Brother Nikhil*, *Fire*, and *Water* have championed social causes. Films like *The King's Speech*, *Thanmatra* (Malayalam), and Hindi films like *Black*, *Khamoshi*, *15 Park Avenue*, and *Taare Zameen Par* portray various physical disabilities.

### **Society Mirroring Cinema**

It is true that cinema reflects society, but society too reflects cinema. In the Indian context we find many aspects of society reflecting cinema; lifestyle, fashion, and even language are deeply influenced by the celluloid world. The hairstyle, dress, mannerisms, and general demeanour of an actor are instantly imitated by the audience, particularly the young. The grip of film stars on their

audience has been aptly described: 'Among the constituting elements of the Hindi film industry, the single most dominant group, the film stars, have a powerful grip on people's imagination, and narratives about film stars' lives occupy film magazines and film journalism—virtually an ancillary industry. These "star texts", supposedly based on rumor and scurrilous reporting, are marked by fascination with and admiration for the lives of the rich and famous.'<sup>5</sup> Today's youth have cinema artistes as icons, and one sees cinema posters in homes, shops, streets, and every conceivable place. Besides, these stars also successfully advertise commercial products.

It is unfortunate, yet true, that some movies instigate violence. Violence has been a sustaining component of Indian cinema for a long time. The masses watch them and some of them are propelled to indulge in violent activities or acquire a violent mindset. While the increase in violence in society has been despised in Hindi films like *Satya* and *Haasil*, the lives of dons and mafias have been glorified by films like *The Godfather* (English), *Sarkar* (Hindi), and *Nayagan* (Tamil). Even the mannerisms of the hero or villain are adopted by the common people. Somehow the underworld life shows well on the silver screen. A writer searches for the cause: 'The underworld's linguistic, cultural, and performative styles have been most vividly captured in film. There are two reasons for this. First, gang life and gangster's world are classic ingredients for a thriller genre and noir cinema. Second, the close connection between the underworld and the film industry has been solidified and consolidated in the last fifteen to twenty years.'<sup>6</sup> In this manner, cinema becomes an indirect cause for the increase in violence in society. Dance, music, and reality shows in television are directly influenced by cinema. Budding dancers and singers are inspired by cinema to mould their creativity.


One of the earliest movies made was the French *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* by Louis and Auguste Lumiere in 1895. The movie was first screened in January 1896 in Lyon. According to a popular legend, the arrival of a train at a station was so vividly portrayed on screen that it caused panic among the viewers, who felt that the train would come out of the screen. Today the reaction may not be as powerful, but it is enough for us to become elated, gloomy, or ecstatic.

There are different kinds of cinema, of which documentaries directly deal with society. John Grierson, considered the father of British and Canadian documentary, called documentary a 'creative interpretation of actuality'. Cinema, which is a mechanical representation of life, is so lifelike that it has become a hall of mirrors through which society is being reflected, analysed, and tinged like a prism or kaleidoscope.

*Stanley Ka Dabba* (Hindi) marks the further maturing of Indian cinema. Rather being vocal about its theme, the film unfolds through an engrossing narrative. This is a film that separates the theme of the film from its dialogues. The viewer carries a strong message that is never voiced in the film. Amole Gupte and his film mark the entry of Indian cinema into a new age of movie-making. As Daney puts it: 'Bad filmmakers have no ideas and good filmmakers have too many, while the greatest have but one. Set firm, it lets them hold the road as they pass through an ever-changing and always interesting landscape.'<sup>7</sup>

Films reveal various kinds of societies, people, cultures, and lifestyles. It is quite likely that most of these societies and characters on the screen are unfamiliar to many, but cinema is an ever-moving image of an ever-moving world depicting the progress of humankind. Such filmmakers always portray society with a blend of social commitment and cinematic aesthetics. Throughout cinema history, from Sergei Eisenstein's *The*

*Battleship Potemkin* to present-day films on many social issues, we observe several facets and fragments of a wide variety of minds. In fact, the tapestry of Indian cinema is so colourful that one has the impression that anything goes in it. A popular writer puts it thus: 'Bollywood audiences had seen it all, loved it all and wanted it all. The Hindi film didn't have one definite face any more. You could be personal, raw and autobiographical like a brilliant young film-maker who cut a vein and wrote on celluloid. You could put your agenda into a streetwise film. ... The new Bollywood, available in every flavour you like and even some you don't.'<sup>8</sup>

The archive of world cinema is like a hall of mirrors—the mirrors of a real world, or sometime a make-believe world. Today cinema has cast off its celluloid wrapping and plunged into digital waters, where technology dictates how cinema has to reinvent itself. This inevitable plunge has made cinema enter a new and bigger dimension. 

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# Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

THE MAIN TEXTS OF VEDANTA are the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, and the *Brahma Sutras*. They are referred to as *prasthāna traya*, triple canon of Vedanta, or three systems of knowledge. The Upanishads constitute the revealed texts; they are the *śruti prasthāna*, system of the Shrutis. The *Brahma Sutra* sets forth the teachings of Vedanta in a logical order and hence is called the *nyāya prasthāna*, system of Nyaya. And the *smṛti prasthāna*, system of the Smritis, is the Bhagavadgita, which is the quintessence of the entire Vedas.

There is another important group of texts known as *prakaraṇa granthas*, auxiliary philosophical texts. A *prakaraṇa grantha* introduces, elaborates, and clarifies some parts of the *prasthāna traya* and yet teaches something more. These texts help us prioritize the teachings of the scriptures. A popular verse defines a *prakaraṇa grantha*:

शास्त्रैकदेश सम्बद्धं शास्त्र-कार्यान्तरे स्थितम् ।  
आहुः प्रकरणं नाम ग्रन्थभेदं विपश्चितः ॥

That book is called a *prakaraṇa grantha* which

is related to a particular part of the scriptures and also serves some purpose other than the scriptures.

*Prakaraṇa* is defined as: a short manual that confines itself to some essential topics of a Shastra, scripture. A *prakaraṇa* treatise has four indispensable elements or *anubandhas*, preliminary questions, to adhere to: *adhikārī*, the determination of the student's fitness for the study; *viśaya*, the subject matter; *sambandha*, the mutual relationship between the treatise and subject matter; and *prayojana*, the object to be attained by the study.<sup>1</sup>

*Vivekachudamani*, *Upadesha-Sahasri*, and *Drig-Drishya Viveka* are some *prakaraṇa granthas*. *Svarajya Siddhih* of Gangadharendra Saraswati is one such text. It is one of a group of important texts of Advaita Vedanta called *siddhi-pañcakam*, pentad of *siddhis*, which are: *Naishkarmya Siddhih* of Sureshvaracharya, *Brahma Siddhih* of Mandana Mishra, *Ishta Siddhih* of Vimuktatman, *Advaita Siddhih* of Madhusudana Saraswati, and *Svarajya Siddhih* of Gangadharendra Saraswati.



### The Book and Its Author

*Svarajya Siddhih* is divided into three *prakaraṇas*, sections. The first section, called *adhyāropa*, superimposition, logically refutes other systems of philosophy and establishes the principles of Advaita Vedanta. The second section, called *apavāda*, de-superimposition, shows that all notions of difference are illogical and the non-duality of Advaita alone is true. The third section, *āgama*, scriptural, establishes *śabda pramāṇa*, verbal testimony, as the means to self-realization.

The author Gangadharendra Saraswati was a disciple of Ramachandra Saraswati, who was a disciple of Sarvajña Saraswati. Ānandabodhendra Sarasvatī, pupil of Gaṅgādharendra Sarasvatī of the nineteenth century, wrote the *Tātparyā-prakāśa*. Gaṅgādharendra also is said to have written a commentary of the same name.<sup>2</sup> *Tātparyā-prakāśa* is a commentary on the *Yoga-Vashishtha*. Gangadharendra is considered to be the author of *Siddhanta-bindu-shikara*.<sup>3</sup> We find the author's period mentioned elsewhere: 'Rāmabhadraṇanda had as his teacher Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, the author of the *Vedānta-siddhānta-candrika*, on which a commentary was written by Gaṅgādharendra Sarasvatī (AD 1826), pupil of Rāmācandra Sarasvatī and pupil's pupil of Sarvajña Sarasvatī, and the author of the *Sāmrājya-siddhi* [sic] with its commentary, the *Kaivalyakalpadruma*' (2.56). 'Gangadharendra is also credited with the works *Vedānta-Siddhānta-Sūktimanjari*, a commentary on Appayya Dikshita's *Siddhānta-Leśa-Saṅgraha*, *Pranavakalpa Vyākhyā*, *Siddhanta Candrika Vyākhyā*, and a commentary on *Ātmasāmrājya Siddhih* of Shankaracharya called *Kaivalyakalpa*.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, some scholars attribute the authorship of *Svarajya Siddhih* to Sureshvaracharya, while others claim it to be the work of Anandabodhendra Saraswati, the disciple of Gangadharendra Saraswati.<sup>5</sup> However, this seems to be wrong

as almost all the extant texts of this book show Gangadharendra Saraswati as the author, who is also called Bodhendra by some. As there have been many other monks of the same name, the author of *Svarajya Siddhih* is called Gangadharendra Saraswati I.<sup>6</sup>

Gangadharendra Saraswati belonged to the Indra Saraswati order of South India. He was the fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram. Apart from this, nothing is known about him.

### Section on Adhyāropa

As is the tradition in India, this text too begins with a *maṅgalācāraṇam*, invocation. It is written in the *maṇḍākrānta* metre.

गंगा पूर प्रचलित जटास्त्रस्त भोगीन्द्र भीता-  
मालिङ्गन्तीमचलतनयां सस्मितं वीक्षमाणः ।  
लीलापाङ्गैः प्रणत जनतां नन्दयंश्चन्द्रमौलि  
मोहध्वातं हरतु परमानन्दमूर्तिः शिवो नः ॥ १ ॥

Let Lord Shiva, who has the moon on his head and is supreme bliss incarnate, who smilingly sees Parvati—who embraces all and gives happiness by bestowing her grace on those who salute her—getting afraid of the serpent-king fallen from his locks, which have been shaken by Ganga's flow, remove the darkness of our ignorance.

The next part of the *maṅgalācāraṇam* salutes God and the guru:

स्मारं स्मारं जनिमृतिभयं जातनिर्वेद वृत्ति-  
ध्यायिध्यायं पशुपतिमुमाकान्तमन्तर्निषण्णम् ।  
पायं पायं सपदि परमानन्द पीयूषधारां  
भूयो भूयो निजगुरुपदाम्भोज युग्मं नमामि ॥ २ ॥

Thinking about the fear of birth and death again and again I developed dispassion, which made me meditate again and again on Pashupati [Shiva], the consort of Uma [Parvati]. I soon drank again and again of the flow of immortality of supreme bliss. I salute the lotus-feet of my guru again and again.

The next verse of the *mangalācāranam*, in *śārdūla-vikrīḍita* metre, is a salutation to the teachers of the unity of jīva and Brahman.

यस्माद्विश्वमुदेति यत्र निवसत्यंते यदप्येति-  
यत् सत्य ज्ञान सुखस्वरूपमवधिद्वैतप्रणाशोज्झितम् ।  
यज्जाग्रत्स्वपनप्रसुप्तिषु विभात्येकं विशोकं परं  
प्रत्यगब्रह्मतदस्मि यस्य कृपया तं देशिकेन्द्रं भजे ॥ ३ ॥

That in which this universe is born, stays, and gets dissolved and is of the same essence as the universe; that knowledge of truth that gives happiness and is beyond the limitations of space and time; that which shines in the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep; that is one and is the supreme, without any sorrow. I worship that illumined guru by whose grace I have got the knowledge that 'I am that Brahman' indwelling in all beings.

Now the author describes the qualifications required of the student of Vedānta. This verse is in the *śikharīṇī* metre.

अधीतेज्या दानव्रत जप समाधान नियमै-  
र्विशुद्धस्वान्तानां जगदिदमसारं विमृशताम् ।  
अरागद्वेषाणामभयचरितानां हितमिदं  
मुमुक्षूणां हृद्यं किमपि निगदामः सुमधुरम् ॥ ४ ॥

We now clearly tell the truth that will be sweet to hear, will be dear to the heart, and will do good to the aspirants of liberation who have purified their minds by the study of the Vedas, sacrifices, charity, austerities, spiritual practices, control of senses, have no attachment, aversion, or fear, and are convinced that this world is not real.

The author proceeds to give evidence of superimposition from the Vedas in a verse written in the *śālīnī* metre.

ज्ञात्वा देवं सर्वं पाशापहानि  
नान्यः पन्थाश्चेति भूयोवचोभिः ।  
ज्ञप्तेः साक्षान्मुक्ति हेतुत्व सिद्धा-  
वध्यासत्वं बन्धनस्यार्थसिद्धम् ॥ ५ ॥

The sentences of the Shruti proclaim that 'having

known the truth, all bonds are destroyed' [*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 1.11] and 'having known that, one transcends death; there is no other path for liberation' [*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 3.8]. Superimposition causes bondage. The direct knowledge of Atman born out of the sentences of the Shruti or Vedas is the cause of liberation.

The passages of the Shruti provide inference for the realization of Truth. The superimposition is destroyed by knowledge and the eternal Truth is revealed. Only false superimpositions like the snake on the rope are destroyed by knowledge.

Objection: As in the material world, objects are destroyed only through positive actions like cutting, hitting, and so on, ignorance can be destroyed only by doing meritorious deeds mentioned in the scriptures. Therefore, the unreality of the world cannot be established if the bond with meritorious deeds capable of producing happiness is destroyed.

This objection is answered in the next verse.

(To be continued)

## References and Notes

1. See John A Grimes, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English* (New York: State University of New York, 1996), 235.
2. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1952), 2.231.
3. See *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 2.220.
4. See 'A Disciple of Sri Iṣṭa Siddhindra Saraswati Swami of the Upaniṣad Braharendra Mutt, Kancheepuram', *Advaita Grantha Kośa* (Calcutta: Deva Vani Parishad, undated), xxxviii, 54, 136, 150.
5. See *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, ed. Karl H Potter, 13 vols (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), 3.19, 3.420; and *Catalogue of Tamil Books in British Museum Library*, ed. L D Barnett and G U Pope, 2 vols (Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), 2.15.
6. See *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, 1.466-7.

# **Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – V**

**Swami Bhajanananda**

(Continued from the previous issue)

## **Traditional Spirituality**

**S**PIRITUALITY IS NOT anything newly introduced into the world either in the East or in the West. It has been with humanity from time immemorial. But the prevalence of interest in spirituality has been marked by periods of upsurge followed by periods of decline.

In India the first efflorescence of spirituality took place during the period of the Upanishads, which, according to Western scholars, was from 1,000 to 300 BCE. This was followed by the rise of Buddhism. After a long period of repeated invasions from the north and political instability a new wave of spirituality was raised by Acharya Shankara in the eighth century CE. A third wave of spirituality was generated by the medieval saints Ramananda, Nanak, Kabir, Jnanadev, and many others. With the spiritual renaissance associated with Sri Ramakrishna, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century, we are now in the midst of a new spiritual wave.

Christianity began as a lay spiritual movement. It became a great cultural and political force in what is today Europe and part of the Middle East and it was made the official religion in the fourth century CE. With the rise of monasticism in the third century, spirituality came to be associated with monastic life—as had happened in the case of Buddhism much earlier. The early centuries produced independent mystics like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil, Evagrius, and others.

After several centuries of political wars and instability came the second wave of spirituality in the sixth century, which was sustained by Benedictine monks. Francis of Assisi started the third wave in the thirteenth century. This was followed by a lay spiritual movement known as *devotio moderna*, 'modern devotion', which produced the famous book the *Imitation of Christ*. The setback caused by the Protestant Reformation was soon overcome by the Catholic spiritual revival in the sixteenth century, some of the key figures of which were Ignatius Loyola, St Teresa of Avila, and St John of the Cross—all Spanish saints. In the seventeenth century the centre of Catholic spirituality shifted to France, which produced several mystics and spiritual guides who, except Brother Lawrence, are not so well known. That, however, proved to be the last flicker of spiritual light in Europe, for a series of historical events such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the influence of science and new sociopolitical theories as well as the world wars brought about the secularization of the West and a considerable decline in spirituality.

## **Modern Spiritual Movement**

By 'modern spiritual movement' is meant the new spiritual trend that originated in the United States in the 1960s. It has been gaining momentum



during the last fifty years and has been exerting its influence in many countries, including India and Japan. Before attempting to understand the real nature and scope of this new movement, it is necessary to note the following points.

In the first place it should be noted that this new movement is not a continuation of the two-millennia-old Christian spiritual tradition discussed above.<sup>8</sup> It is a new spiritual phenomenon that has no precedent.

Secondly, the new movement represents the shifting of the centre of spirituality from the Old World to the New World. In spite of all the violence and immorality reported in the newspapers, the United States is emerging as the most spiritually awakened nation in the West. There are enough reasons to believe that India and America would be the two leading nations in the realm of spirituality in the future decades and centuries.

Another point to be noted about this new movement is that it is for the most part a lay movement completely unorganized, diffuse, and diverse. It now consists of so many diverse and disparate elements that it is more correct to regard it as a new sociocultural phenomenon than as a movement. The only thing that gives this phenomenon a sense of commonness, a semblance of unity, and a strong foundation is spirituality per se. The modern spiritual movement represents the struggle of a people to indigenize an alien view of reality and life that has not been thrust upon them through missionary strategies, but is something they have willingly accepted as it meets their needs and aspirations.

***The First Phase*** • That view of reality and life derived from India's ancient scriptures, the Upanishads and the Gita, and the ancient system of philosophy known as Vedanta, first reached the shores of the US in the early decades of the nineteenth century and influenced some of the greatest people the country ever

produced—Emerson, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman. The inspiring writings of these creative geniuses influenced thousands of people, as they still do, and prepared the ground for a vast new movement. It was in that fertile ground that Swami Vivekananda sowed the live seeds of the universal message of his master Sri Ramakrishna and imparted an awakening impulse to the dormant spiritual consciousness of Americans. That primary spiritual awakening still provides the inner dynamic of the modern spiritual movement, though it is not always recognized as such.

Thus, the beginnings of the new movement were spiritual and Vedantic. During the two world wars, which devastated Europe, the US remained isolated. During that period some young monks of high intellectual and spiritual calibre were sent by the Ramakrishna Order to the US. They started several centres and established the Vedanta movement on a firm foundation.<sup>9</sup> What we have discussed so far constitutes the first phase of the modern spiritual movement in the West.

***The Second Phase*** • If the first phase was a pleasant daydream, what followed as the second phase was a nightmare. The second phase was a social revolution that swept through the US from 1965, the like of which had never happened before in the West. A variety of factors such as the collective sense of glut resulting from the enormous increase in affluence, disillusionment with the promises of science and technology, loss of trust in traditional religions and faith in God, Freudian psychology—which tended to destroy family relationships—the existentialist 'quest for meaning', the postmodernist iconoclasm and anti-intellectual movements in academic circles, the women's liberation movement, the futile Vietnam War, and lastly the relaxation of immigration laws by President Lyndon Johnson, which resulted in the flooding of the US society by a sudden influx of oriental ideas and

hordes of gurus, yogis, rishis, lamas, Sufis, and other kinds of spiritual guides—all these factors contributed to the starting of the social revolution. This new phenomenon was a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous. The sublime part was the removal of racial segregation and social barriers; the ridiculous part was the rapidly spreading evil of drug abuse and the rise of the bizarre hippie movement, which tarnished the reputation of Western culture in oriental countries.<sup>10</sup>

This second phase is also known as the New Age and the age of Counter Culture.<sup>11</sup> What began as pure spirituality became clouded with a host of incongruous elements such as astrology, Ayurveda, pranic healing, reiki, crystal gazing, pyramid, rebirth, regression therapy, Gaia hypothesis, black mass, kundalini, psychedelia, and a host of other practices and cults.

What is most tragic about the whole bizarre phenomenon is the enormous waste of physical, psychic, and spiritual energies that it involved. It was as if hundreds of thousands of apparently rational people had come under a strange, extended hypnotic spell, the maya of the Divine Mother. Fortunately, the second phase exhausted itself to a great extent by the 1990s, thereby ending a bizarre chapter in the recent history of human culture.

**The Third Phase** • The beginning of the third phase is marked by the emergence of spirituality as a clear fountain out of the debris of superstitions, misconceptions, distortions of facts, and perversions of human instincts. During the second phase the followers of spirituality formed only a small section of society, which consisted of mostly misguided or eccentric individuals, including college dropouts and hippies. Spirituality was considered to be outside the purview of science, although a few eminent scientists had spoken of the need to have a spiritual perspective on life.

By contrast, the present-day spiritual

movement belongs to the mainstream of world thought and social life. Its followers are normal successful individuals holding responsible jobs and include business executives, lawyers, salespersons, therapists, housewives, and others belonging to all walks of life. Not only that, spirituality is now considered to be an essential aspect of a healthy and sane life. Its most important characteristic is that it is supported by science and technology.

### **Change in Attitude towards Spirituality**

All over the free world there has come a radical change in the attitude towards spirituality. Regarded till recently as mysticism meant only for recluses, spirituality has suddenly become an important subject of discussion and research in universities and of practical application in day-to-day life. There are several reasons for this change that also indicate the general temper of the present age. Some of the causes are mentioned below.

(i) **Quest for the Ultimate** • From time immemorial the human soul has been seeking to attain immortality, supreme knowledge, supreme happiness, and everlasting peace. This aspiration had remained long suppressed owing to prevalence of materialism and preoccupation with the struggle for existence. With the recent changes in social conditions, the eternal quest is asserting itself once again in the souls of people.

(ii) **Existential Problems** • Human problems are of four kinds: economic, social, psychological, and existential. In developed countries economic and social problems are to a great extent solved or are being dealt with. Psychological and existential problems have greatly increased in recent years. The difference between the two is that psychological problems have a specific known or knowable cause such as traumatic experiences in childhood or in later life,

unfavourable family circumstances, repression of instinctual desires, and so forth. These can be effectively dealt with by clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, mental hospitals, and others. By contrast, existential problems have no specific external cause. They arise from the very nature of human existence, from the alienation of the human soul from its divine substratum. Some of the common existential problems are: loneliness, meaninglessness of life, angst—a persistent feeling of insecurity or anxiety without any specific cause—unfulfilment, and so forth. These existential problems have no other solution than spirituality or spiritual life. In fact, it is the existential crises in one's life that provide the major motivation to turn to spiritual life.

**(iii) Overcoming Stress in Life** • Industrialization, unfavourable living conditions, the breakdown of family life, cut-throat competition, demanding jobs, hectic work schedules, financial uncertainties, and several other factors have made the lives of modern people very stressful. However, as Dr Hans Selye, who did pioneering work in understanding the physiological and biochemical reactions in the body to stress, has said, stress is unavoidable in life. Without facing stress nothing worthwhile in life can be achieved. But if stress goes beyond a person's stress-bearing capacity, it can cause serious mental disturbances or psychosomatic diseases. Therefore, what anybody who wants to attain success in life should do is not to avoid stressful jobs, but to learn to

*From left to right: Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order Satprakashananda, Vividishananda, Yatiswarananda, Prabhavananda, Devatmananda, and Akhilananda in Santa Barbara, US, 1947*





overcome stress or stress-induced reactions in the mind and the body. Studies conducted with the help of biofeedback and other scientific techniques have shown that spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, self-enquiry, and the like are effective means of overcoming stress and strain in life. As a result meditation and other spiritual techniques have now come to be employed in secular life as well. Therapists and management gurus nowadays advise people to practise these methods. Many companies are arranging talks and classes on spirituality by leading spiritual personalities for the benefit of their employees.

*(iv) Shift in Management Philosophy* • We have been discussing the reasons for the growing, widespread interest in spirituality in today's society. Another reason is the realization that spirituality is a great help in leading a successful individual life and also in the successful management of companies. A paradigm shift is now taking place in management philosophy in the West as well as in the East. After trying the British, American, and Japanese models of management one after the other, there now seems to be a move to try the Indian spiritual approach in management. Regarding this the following points may be noted.

A new line of thinking on management began after World War II with the rise of the United States to the status of the wealthiest nation in the world. Research into the factors behind this phenomenon led to the discovery of the importance of 'human capital' in business management.

The oil crisis of the 1970s led to the collapse of the automobile industry and several other industries in the US. The decline of social morality and the rise of the hippie movement showed the dangers of pursuing a materialistic, pleasure-seeking way of life.

In the meantime the Japanese mastered electronic technology and rose to the status of an

economic superpower, second in rank only to the US. The Japanese created a new management philosophy that emphasized human values and familial loyalty to the company. But within thirty years the Japanese economy ran out of steam.

The onset of the knowledge revolution fuelled by advancements in information technology as well as the globalization of economy have led to radical changes in business administration, the creation of the software industry, and the rise of China and India as economic powers. Parallel to these developments great changes have been taking place in social life and in the thinking, outlook, and belief patterns of people all over the world.

It is now being increasingly realized in the corporate world that humans do not live by bread alone. Humans have a hierarchy of emotional, social, creative—self-actualizing—and spiritual needs. As Karl Marx pointed out long ago, the purpose of work is to be a means of fulfilling these needs and not merely to earn money. Therefore, unless business management is based on a work culture that ensures this kind of value-fulfilment, mere monetary incentives alone are not enough to induce employees, especially top executives, to be loyal to the company or to give their best to it.

Of all the values, the spiritual value is the most important. Executives endowed with a spiritual perspective tend to look upon their work as a spiritual discipline and are more likely to discharge their duties with great care and sincerity. They tend to be more calm and collected and are thus able to take correct decisions as well as face difficulties and failures with faith and courage. They are also seen to be more courteous and loving to their colleagues and more forbearing and sympathetic towards the employees under them. Executives endowed with a spiritual perspective are thus a great asset to any organization or

institution. A company based on spiritual principles works smoothly and efficiently, like a well-designed and lubricated machine.

**(v) Support of Science and Technology** • We now come to the most important reason why interest in spirituality is growing rapidly among people belonging to all walks of life in the mainstream of society. Spirituality is now receiving the indirect support, and in some cases the direct support, of science. This support comes from the fact that the connecting link between science and spirituality has been found: it is *consciousness*. The discovery of consciousness as the common ground between science and spirituality is one of the most significant events in the recent history of human culture and is likely to have far-reaching influence on the future of humankind. Consciousness is now one of the most important subjects of study in different branches of science. It is at the cutting edge of interdisciplinary research. We mention here briefly four disciplines that are now studying consciousness from four different angles.

Western philosophy has taken up consciousness studies seriously. It now recognizes two types of consciousness: one is the empirical consciousness gained through senses and thinking, which can be expressed in words. The other type of consciousness is the ineffable, inexpressible types of awareness such as aesthetic experience and transcendental spiritual experience.

Western psychology has practically given up Freudian psychology as unscientific and has outgrown the limitations of behaviourism. Its main field now is cognitive psychology, which deals with all aspects of consciousness. It also has seriously taken up transpersonal psychology and transcendental spiritual experiences, which Abraham Maslow has termed 'peak experiences'.

In neuroscience the main problem is to decide whether the mind is the same as the brain

or different from it. Either way, attempts have been made, with the help of EEG, MRI, and other equipment to show the effect of spiritual experience on the cerebral hemispheres.<sup>12</sup>

Modern physicists have also in recent years shown interest in consciousness. On the one hand, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, Godel's Theorem, and others have shown the limitations of human knowledge as expressed through mathematics. On the other hand, it has been discovered that human consciousness has a direct role in determining the objective reality of subatomic phenomena. An electron may exist as a wave or as a particle, but what it actually is at a particular moment depends upon the observer.

These studies on consciousness and views of eminent scientists on the subject have helped to strengthen the faith of people in the authenticity of spiritual life, and have contributed much to the growing universal appeal of spirituality.

(To be continued)

## Notes and References

8. An attempt was made in the 1950s to intensify contemplative life in the Catholic tradition by Thomas Merton in the US and by Abhishiktananda and Bede Giffith in India. A similar attempt to revive contemplative life in the Greek Orthodox tradition was made at Mount Athos.
9. For a detailed, scholarly study of the Ramakrishna-Vedanta movement in the West see Karl T Jackson, *Vedanta for the West: The Ramakrishna Movement in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1994).
10. For a comprehensive and balanced account of the first and second phases of the modern spiritual movement see Philip Goldberg, *American Veda* (New York: Harmony Books, 2010).
11. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).
12. One of the most well known of these studies is that conducted by Andrew Newberg, et al. See their book *Why God Won't Go Away* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002).

# Holy Mother's Concern for Common Persons

**Swami Tathagatananda**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

SOMETIME DURING 1914 a middle-aged father came to see the Mother. He was holding his young daughter by the hand. She was barely sixteen or seventeen years old. She was grief-stricken and broken-hearted over the loss of her infant, who had died that morning. The father brought her to the Mother with the hope that she could console his daughter. The Mother spoke tenderly to the anguished girl and let her sit close to her. The girl reached out to touch Holy Mother's feet in reverence. The Mother drew away a little and said: 'Well, should she touch me? She is now in a period of mourning.' These words deepened the girl's distress, but she respectfully retreated a few steps away from the Mother.

The Mother gazed at the girl's face; her tender age and grief filled her with compassion. 'Ah, my poor girl!' she said. 'You have suffered much, so you have come to me for solace. And who knows how much I have hurt your feelings?' She drew near to her and said: 'Come, my dear, touch my feet.' The floodgates of the girl's heart opened. Tearfully, she gently placed her head on the Mother's feet, grateful for the release of her pent-up sorrow. The Mother placed her hand on the girl's head and blessed her abundantly.<sup>16</sup>

## **Love Beyond Place and Time**

The Master once told the Mother: 'My dear, Vishnupur is a hidden Vrindavan; you must see

it.' She said: 'I am a woman; how can I see?' But the Master just said: 'No, my dear, you will see, you will.'<sup>17</sup> When a railway station was opened at Vishnupur, the Mother would always return to her home in Jayrambati by way of Vishnupur. She immensely enjoyed her visits to Vishnupur.

One day while the Mother was waiting for the train at Vishnupur Station, she noticed a melancholy woman on the same platform. The Mother approached her and asked her what was troubling her. The woman explained that her son had died, but even with the passage of time she had not found ease from her pain. She was inconsolable and felt that a pilgrimage to a holy place might help her. The woman's bereavement deeply touched the Mother's heart.

Profoundly moved by the Mother's loving concern, the floodgates of the woman's heart opened wide and she began to wail loudly. After a little while she was more composed and told the Mother all the details of her son's death. 'I will initiate you,' the Mother told her. 'I have a Guru,' the woman replied. 'We are followers of Vaishnavism.'

Holy Mother said to the woman: 'You can repeat your Guru's mantra first and then repeat my mantra.' She initiated her at the railway station under a tree. In due course of time the woman achieved a calm state of mind. It is reported that the Mother made numerous visits to her home from the day of their meeting at the railway station.<sup>18</sup>



On another occasion at Vishnupur Station a porter from Bihar or Uttar Pradesh suddenly approached the Mother while she was waiting for the train and began crying loudly. After a little while he composed himself and said: 'You are my mother Sita; what a long time I have been searching for you! Where had you been so long?'<sup>19</sup> The man's sincerity and longing deeply touched the Mother's heart. She asked him to bring a flower. He offered it at her feet at the Vishnupur Railway Station and she initiated him.

A similar event once took place during Durga Puja in Jayrambati. A humble man from the lowly Bagdi caste wanted to offer flowers at Holy Mother's feet on the second day of the Durga worship. He had been quietly standing aside without any hope of doing so and felt great joy in his heart when she allowed it (360).

The Mother's love for her children was no ordinary love, nor was she an ordinary mother. She is the Mother of the whole universe. For this reason, her love excluded no one and expected no return. Those irretrievable souls that others shunned or abused, the Mother's love embraced. She saw beyond their condition whenever they came to her, craving for a tiny drop of her motherly affection to ease their suffering. Faultless, she found no fault in others. 'I am the mother of the virtuous as well as the wicked.'<sup>20</sup> Her words reassure us that every one is near to her. Throughout her life, she was a conspicuous vessel of infinite love and grace.

### ***Undiscriminating Love***

The Mother used to say: 'To err is human; but how few know how to lead an erring man!'<sup>21</sup> Born and raised in a rural environment, she was particularly sympathetic to those who belonged to a low caste. She was very sensitive to their suffering. She knew that the criminal tendency of people belonging to a lower caste could be traced to their everlasting misfortune in life.

One of these persons who attracted her love and sympathy was Amzad, a Muslim. He was a mulberry farmer and silk weaver by trade. When foreign competition collapsed the weaving trade in West Bengal, Amzad and other Muslim weavers became destitute. They had no other skill by which to make a living. They were forced to resort to petty theft and highway robbery in order to survive. Even in this manner they could not earn enough money to take care of their families. A current famine worsened their situation. Desperate, they went to the Mother for help.

Holy Mother was fully aware of their unlawful behaviour and of the local prejudice against Muslims, the least privileged class. She ignored all prejudice. Deeply moved by their pitiable condition, she treated them openly with affection, as if they were her own children. At that time a new house was being built for Holy Mother in Jayrambati. Thanks to her loving influence, the monks who were in charge of this work were inspired to hire some of them, enabling them to work respectably to maintain their families. Every one of these mulberry farmers felt that the Mother was his real mother.

Holy Mother's universal compassion made her accept everyone as a devotee of God, regardless of his or her circumstances or demerit. The mulberry farmers wanted to express their gratitude. One of them cautiously approached the Mother one day. He was carrying an offering for the Master. He said: 'Mother, here are some plantains for the Master; will you accept them?' She stretched out her hands at once and said: 'Certainly I will, my dear; hand them over. Why should I not, since you have brought them for the Master?' (Ibid.). She added these fruits to her store for the Master and sent the farmer home with some sweets and fried rice. Her action touched his heart and made him very happy.

The Mother's deep affection towards poor people always found a ready critic. A neighbouring village woman had witnessed this entire episode with the poor Muslim worker. The grateful farmer, clutching his treasured prasada, was about to leave the Mother. The woman came up to the Mother and her lower caste son and began openly criticizing the Mother for accepting gifts from 'thieves'. The Mother waited for the farmer to pass out of earshot before she corrected her critic. With a stern countenance, she said to the woman: 'I know who is good and who is not' (ibid.).

On another occasion she asked Amzad to sit on her veranda and eat some food. Her niece Nalini Devi served him the food with strict observance of the caste restrictions towards someone who was supposedly beneath her. She flung the food onto Amzad's plate from the courtyard, a short distance away. This made the Mother unhappy. She said to her: 'Can one have any relish for food if it is served in such a fashion? If you can't serve him properly, I shall do it.' The Mother fed Amzad affectionately and removed his scraps from the banana leaf. This clear break with caste rules frightened Nalini Devi. 'Oh dear Aunt,' she cried out, 'you lose your caste thereby!' The Mother corrected her at once: 'Amzad is as truly my son as my Sharat [Swami Saradananda] himself is' (ibid.).

Fear and repulsion are the close companions of prejudice. Nalini Devi caught the Mother doing the same thing again by serving another one of her children and said: 'Ah me!' She's removing the leavings of a multitude of castes!' The Mother, however, knew nothing of disunity: 'What if they are from various castes? They are all my children' (359). It was actually a part of the Mother's daily routine to remove the plates. Whenever she did this for the swamis a few women of the household would criticize her actions. Her response

was always quick and natural: 'Well, I am their mother. If a mother shouldn't do it for her children's sake, who else should?' (Ibid.).

Returning to Amzad, a few days after cleaning his plate with her own hands, the Mother developed fever. She lay down on the cot in her room. A thin bamboo screen scarcely shielded her from view, but she did not refuse visitors. Amzad came to see her. He was emaciated from hunger, dressed in rags, and walking unsteadily. His beaming face, however, betrayed a reverence for her that exceeded his misery. Hoping to get from her a consoling glimpse, he tiptoed over to the screen and peeked over it. He was barely visible. The Mother recognized him at once: 'Is that you, dear Amzad? Come in.'

The endearing sound of her voice filled him with joy. His shame disappeared. He began talking to her easily about his own affairs and forgot all his sorrows. Later he bathed, soothed his rough skin with oil, and had a good meal. He was seen walking home contentedly, chewing betel and areca nuts. In one hand he held a precious vial of medicine to help him recover from stimulants. In the other he held his satchel, filled with assorted tasty morsels. All had been provided by the Mother (373-4).

The Mother always worried about Amzad. Although he received the sweet showers of her divine love, he could not stop his habit of stealing. Police authorities often caught him and imprisoned him. On those occasions his wife would rush to the Mother and ask for food. Poor Amzad knew he would never be able to give the Mother anything in return for her kindness. His heart, filled with gratitude and love, sought to find expression. One day he stole a cow and was caught. After a long imprisonment he returned home and found a cluster of ripe gourds dangling from his thatched roof. He immediately thought of the Mother and pulled down a few gourds.

Filled with joy and anticipation, he carried them to Jayrambati and gave them to her. The Mother was happy to see him even after learning the unfortunate reason for his long absence (374–5).

The power of the Mother's love for Amzad never abated. During her final illness he did not come to see her. She suffered considerable anxiety on that account. She had to be told that he was caught stealing by the police and arrested after evading them for a long time. 'Ah me!' she said to the one who gave her the news. 'Look here, my dear, I knew that he was an adept in robbery' (375). The Mother's great compassion for hardened criminals and other social outcasts can never be told in full.

### **Personification of Mother Kali**

Binodbehari Som was nicknamed Padmabinode. He had the good fortune of being introduced to Sri Ramakrishna by Master Mahashaya, in whose school he was enrolled as a student. Unfortunately, he got involved with the theatre, which led to his alcohol addiction.

Padmabinode, however, never lost his powerful faith in Sri Ramakrishna and the Mother. This was his true intoxication. He knew Saradananda and used to call him *dost*, chum. He was often heard singing in a drunken stupor on his way home late at night. He always passed by the Mother's Udbodhan house. Very late one night his powerful love for Sri Ramakrishna and

*Photo taken in Sureshwar Bhavan, Nabasan Village, Vishnupur, in 1920;  
from left to right: Holy Mother (eating food), Radhu's Mother (inside the room, unclear), Nalini, Nandarani, and Yamini*





Holy Mother brought him beneath her window,  
where he stumbled around singing loudly:

Get up, Mother gracious,  
and open the door;  
Nothing is visible in the dark;  
and my heart ever throbs.  
How often do I call on thee,  
O Tara (Kali) at the pitch of my voice!  
And yet, though kind thou art forsooth,  
how thou behavest today!  
Leaving thy child outside,  
thou sleepest inside;  
While crying, 'Mother,' 'Mother,'  
I am reduced to skin and bone!  
With proper pitch, tune, modulation,  
and cadence in all the three gamuts,  
I call on thee so often;  
and still thou awakest not!  
Maybe, thou hast turned thy face  
because of my engrossment in play.  
Do thou look at me with upturned face,  
and I shan't go for play again.  
Who but a Mother can bear the burden  
of such a wretched son?

Padmabinode's straightforward appeal and heartfelt devotion awakened the Mother. Despite her pain from chronic rheumatism, she got up, rushed to the window, and opened it wide. Padmabinode was thrilled to the bone. He began rolling on the ground. He stood up, placed some dust on his head to salute her, and left singing: 'Keep Mother Shyama (Kali) carefully concealed in your heart; O mind, mayest thou and I only see Her and none else. ... May I see Her, and *not* my *dost*' (206–7). He expressed himself in this way more than once.

Others with lesser insight and spiritual culture misunderstood the Mother's infinite compassion. When they told her she should not be getting up at such a late hour, she said: 'I can't contain myself at his call' (*ibid.*). She could not refuse anyone who sincerely called upon her as 'mother'.

Sometime around 1877 Sri Sarada Devi was travelling with some companions from Jayram-bati to Dakshineswar via Arambagh and Tarakeshwar. This meant that they had to pass through the lonely meadows of Telo-bhelo, where fierce robbers lurked. They reached Arambagh. Telo-Bhelo lay ahead. They hurried on to reach Tarakeshwar before nightfall and avoid the danger. Sri Sarada Devi could not keep up with her companions and lagged behind. As her companions made their way towards Tarakeshwar, they anxiously watched for a sight of her, but there was none. Sri Sarada Devi walked on alone as darkness fell. Suddenly, she came face to face with a dacoit. His threatening manner and rough demeanour rooted her to the spot with fear. Nonetheless, she broke the ominous silence with her simple, unassuming manner. 'Father,' she said, 'my companions have left me behind, besides, methinks, I have lost my way. Will you kindly take me to them? Your son-in-law lives in the Kali temple of Rani Rasmani at Dakshineswar. I am on my way to him. If you take me to that place he will treat you very cordially' (70). Her spiritual attitude displayed itself in all its frankness and purity. Her divinity must have created a deep impact on the robber's mind, for no harm came to her—he and his wife treated her as their daughter. She returned their watchfulness by looking out for them as part of her spiritual family later on.

The Mother's budding divine motherhood transformed a potentially life-threatening encounter into an affectionate, intimate relationship. The stunning reversal of violence in the robber's mind wonderfully reveals the transforming power of her unlimited redeeming love. It is reported that the dacoit saw Kali in her, and this is no wonder to the faithful disciples of the Mother. On 5 June 1872, during the auspicious time for the worship of Kali in her aspect

of Phalaharini—destroyer of the effects of past deeds—Sri Sarada Devi had been worshipped as Shodashi, the Mother of the Universe, by Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar (48).

Holy Mother was found to excel the Master in qualities like affection and forgiveness. Wherever she went, she gave initiation to those who were eager for spiritual ministration. She did this to the end of her life, regardless of her rheumatism and other ailments. Following the injunction of the Master, Holy Mother accepted a great deal of suffering after initiating many undeserving and immoral persons—her mother's heart could not refuse them. The Mother sometimes demonstrated great indulgence towards those who were sincerely struggling to change their evil ways. Their pitiable condition aroused her compassion and she did not exempt them from her grace.

### **Accepting Poison**

In 1909 three devotees came to Holy Mother at Jayrambati for initiation. They carried a letter from Swami Brahmananda that recommended them to the Mother for initiation. After it was read aloud to her, she allowed the devotees to enter her room. Due to the effects of rheumatism she usually stretched her legs while sitting. Immediately upon seeing them, she withdrew her legs. They were unfit, in the Mother's eyes, for initiation due to their worldliness. She told them to return to Belur Math and have their initiation there.

The devotees left her room feeling very disappointed and did not have the heart to leave. They lingered in the outer room. After a little while they returned to her and begged her again to initiate them. Holy Mother turned to the Master's image. 'Master,' she said, 'I prayed to you yesterday that the day might not pass uselessly. And at long last you too bring these!'

The Mother yielded to their earnest appeal and turned again to the Master's image. 'Master,' she said, 'let me carry on your work so long as the body lasts' (401).

Holy Mother wanted these three undeserving devotees to strengthen their spiritual resolve a little before receiving initiation; in due course, she initiated them. They returned to Belur Math and immediately informed Swami Brahmananda of having received their initiation from Holy Mother. The swami was seated on the Math's upper verandah overlooking the Ganga. Swamis Premananda, Shivananda, and Saradananda were with him. The devotees approached them and related the details of their initiation from Holy Mother. The swamis were amazed to learn that the Mother had initiated them, and thereby had accepted the veritable poison of these devotees' worldly deeds.

Swami Brahmananda sat silently for a long while. Swami Premananda folded his hands in reverence and sighed deeply. 'Mercy, mercy!' he said. 'It's by this glorious compassion that the Mother is protecting us forever. We can't express in words the poison that she has accepted. If we had done so, we would have been burnt to ashes' (402). With these words Swami Premananda expressed the shared feeling of all the monks of the Ramakrishna Order about the act of mercy that was visited on the three devotees. Holy Mother's overwhelming compassion moved him very deeply. He wrote in a letter:

Who has understood the Holy Mother? There's not a trace of grandeur. The Master had at least his power of *vidya* (knowledge) manifested, but the Mother?—her perfection of knowledge is hidden. What a mighty power is this! Glory to the Mother! Glory to the Mother! Glory to the powerful Mother! A poison that we can't assimilate we pass on to the Mother. She draws everyone to her lap. An infinite power—an

incomparable grace! Glory to the Mother! Not to speak of us; we haven't seen the Master himself doing this. With how much caution and with what testing he accepted any one! And here—what do you see here at the Mother's place? Wonderful! Wonderful! She grants shelter to everyone, eats food from the hands of almost anyone, and all is digested! Mother, Mother, victory unto the Mother! (115–16).

### ***Mother's Shelter for the Weak***

One day the Mother was at Koalpara, sitting quietly under a tamarind tree. A woman from the sweeper caste, clearly in a disturbed state, was walking nearby. She came to the Mother and sat at her feet. She began to weep bitterly. As the story unfolded, it turned out that she had just lost her paramour. She had sacrificed everything for his sake. The paramours belonged to the same caste and had lived together for many years. Now, suddenly, he abandoned her without thinking about what would happen to her as a scorned woman with a bad reputation. She felt hopelessly alone. This woman's sorrow moved the Mother's heart and she sent for the man.

The Mother gently rebuked him without accusing him. 'She came to you leaving everything behind; and you have accepted her services so long' (371). Her words went straight to his heart. Filled with loving concern for both of them, she told him: 'If you desert her now, you will incur great sin; you won't find a place even in hell' (ibid.). These words had the desired effect; the cruel intent of the inconsiderate lover was reversed completely. Chastised by the Mother's mercy, he acted rightly and took the woman home.

A very young girl living near Jayrambati had been earning her living by carrying people's luggage on her head. She could no longer recollect the event of her marriage or memories of her

husband, who had died when she was in her early teens. When she became a young woman, she had an affair with a local youth. The great commotion over this inappropriate behaviour by the couple rocked the village; everyone was making a loud noise about it. The girl, already isolated and afraid, became the distressed victim of the scandal.

This young woman had been visiting the Mother for some time. Although the Mother knew her and felt deeply about her deplorable circumstances, she was helpless to do anything to save her from the public outcry that was raging against her. She began to pray for the young woman's welfare.

God responded to the Mother's prayer. One of Holy Mother's devotees happened to be a prominent man of that village. He intervened on behalf of the helpless young woman and the situation became calm and quiet. The Mother was profoundly relieved by this turn of events. One day the same male devotee came to pay obeisance to the Mother. She blessed him profusely and said: 'Son, now that you have saved that girl, I am at peace. May God bless you.'<sup>22</sup>

A young man from a privileged class who was initiated by the Mother used to visit her often. He used his wealth to start an ashrama in his village, which was near Jayrambati. Somehow he made the unwise personal decision to have an affair with a close relative, who had been widowed young. Those who knew about his indelicate behaviour with that woman were outraged about his continued visits to the Mother. They approached the Mother and asked her to stop receiving him at her abode. Although the young man's lack of discretion greatly pained her, the Mother told them: 'How can I, who am his mother, forbid him to come? Such words will never pass out of my lips.' The Mother continued giving her affection to the young man in the face



of strong criticism. She also showed her affection to the young woman in question by teaching her how to correct her lapses through upholding moral values.<sup>23</sup>

One day the Mother was sitting on the upper veranda of the Udbodhan house doing japa. Suddenly, she heard an outburst of verbal abuse and sounds of physical violence. They were coming from the field directly across the road from the Mother's house. Some labourers lived there with their families in small huts. She continued telling her rosary but the ruckus became much louder. Someone was beating his wife ruthlessly. She could hear the sound of his fists and slaps landing upon the woman's body and her cries of pain. When the Mother heard a terrible thudding sound, she realized that he was also kicking her. One kick was so violent that it threw the woman, with her baby tightly grasped in her arms, out of the hut and rolling into the courtyard.

At this, the Mother stopped her japa. It was never Holy Mother's custom to raise her voice, but on this occasion she held on to the railing and cried out as loudly as she could to the man: 'I say, you wretch, will you kill your wife outright? Alas, what a pity!' Her words had a magical restraining effect on the enraged husband. He was instantly pacified. He recoiled in shame and timidly withdrew into the hut. It turned out that the sole cause of his anger was that his wife had not cooked his rice on time. A short time later he came out of the hut and reassured his frightened wife in a gentle manner (427).

A woman from a respectable family had a moral lapse and afterward came to her senses. She was genuinely penitent for her moral lapses and came to the Mother's house at Udbodhan. Filled with remorse and trembling with shame, she began to cry on the Mother's doorstep. After expressing her pent-up emotion, she was anxious to purify herself and be a recipient of the

Mother's compassion and guidance. 'Mother, what will be my lot?' she implored. 'I am not fit to draw nearer to you in this holy chapel' (399). The Mother went to the doorstep, threw her arms around the woman's neck, and took her into her room. She said: 'Come, my daughter, come in. You have realized what sin is, and you are repentant. Come, I will initiate you. Lay everything at the Master's feet; and cast away all fear' (ibid.). By giving this supplicant her full divine assurance, Holy Mother relieved the woman's feelings of guilt, fear, and despair and gave her the real hope that she would get over her sinful tendencies in due course.

(To be continued)

## References

16. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother*, 257–8.
17. *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, 273.
18. See Pranavesh Chakravorty, 'Duhkhi O Avaheliter Ma', *Shatarupe Sarada*, 563.
19. *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, 417.
20. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother*, 305.
21. *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, 372.
22. *Reminiscences of Sri Sarada Devi*, comp. and ed. Swami Purnatmananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2004), 35.
23. *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, 369–70.

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(Continued from page 155)

The summary presented in this essay attempts to demonstrate that despite the multiplicity and diversity of languages across various regions of India there is a strong element of commonality in the use of phonological segments, which may imply common elements at other cultural levels as well.

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## Reference

1. See 'India' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2009).

# Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels

**Somenath Mukherjee**

(Continued from the previous issue)

## SS Germanic

**O**N 29 MAY 1875 the *New York Times* had this news:

The new steam-ship Germanic, of the White Star Line, which is expected to arrive at this port next Sunday, on her first trip across the Atlantic, is a sister ship to the Britannic, which was launched about twelve months ago. The length of the Germanic over all is 470 feet, with a keel 455 feet long. The breadth of her beam is 45 feet, and the depth of the hold is 34 feet. The gross registered tonnage of the vessel is 5,000 tons, and the net tonnage is 3,150 tons. She can accommodate 180 saloon and 1,100 steerage passengers. She has three decks, the main, upper, and lower. There is a promenade or spar deck, 163 feet long, and 48 feet wide. The steering is done by steam, and is worked from the wheel-house, situated under the Captain's bridge amid-ships.<sup>40</sup>

This news also mentions an important piece of contemporary practice: 'A system of telegraphy has been introduced for working the ship when going in and out of dock, thereby obviating shouting and delay in executing orders' (ibid.). Besides, the *New York Times* continues:

The Vessel is divided into nine water-tight compartments, the bulk-heads of five of them reaching to the main deck, thus giving great stability to the vessel as well as securing her safety. The engine and boiler space is 107 feet long, and this, considering the vast power required to propel a ship of the size of the Germanic, is

economical, and leaves ample rooms for passengers and cargo. There are four cylinders, two high and two low pressure, the diameter of the former being 48 inches and the latter 83 inches. The stroke of piston is five feet. The nominal horse-power is 760, capable of working up to 5,400. The steam is supplied by eight oval shaped boilers each fed by four furnaces. The boilers are placed in sets of four, and each set is in a water-tight compartment. By an ingenious arrangement the doors of the water-tight bulk-heads may be closed in the event of water entering the adjoining compartments. In the case of the set of boilers furthest from the engines, these can be shut off from the bunkers beyond a slip door, which may be closed instantly by a turn of the handle through the agency of compressed air. A door on either side of the bulk-head will rise in the event of water coming into the hold below, and by these means the contingency of the fires being extinguished is amply and ingeniously provided against. To every compartment in the vessel there is run a steam pipe, which in case of fire could at once be used for extinguishing purposes. In addition there is a fire hose the full length of the first class saloon, which is attached to the plug every night, so as to be ready for use at a moment's notice. There are also connections in every part of the ship to which the hose could be applied in case of necessity, so that the appliances for meeting the emergency of fire are of the most complete description. ... The main saloon for first-class passengers is amidships in the middle deck. ... The saloon of the Germanic is a magnificent apartment, 52 feet 9 inches in length, 42 feet



SS Germanic (between 1890 and 1900)

6 inches in width, with a height of nearly eight feet. The tables are arranged lengthwise, and as many as 200 persons can dine together. The new revolving chairs which have been introduced largely promote the comfort and convenience of the passengers, which admit of their leaving the table without disturbing those beside them. All of the furniture of the saloon is of teak, and the upholstery is in red velvet. The paneling is of beautifully-polished birds-eye maple, with fluted teak columns, and the walls are covered with neatly embossed *papier mache*, which is rendered water-proof. The flooring is of oak teak and walnut and is handsomely carpeted. A gay and cheerful aspect is derived from the decoration of the walls and the varieties of glasses of various shapes and colors standing in the racks which are suspended from the ceiling. A well-appointed fireplace, a handsome piano, and attractive library are features of the

saloon. ... At the head of the spacious staircase leading from the saloon is a comfortable smoking-room, abundantly furnished with elegant lounges and tables. The ladies' saloon is on the promenade deck, and is luxuriantly furnished. Forward and left of the chief saloon there are seventy-five state rooms of various dimensions, all sumptuously furnished, some of them being large enough to accommodate a family. Two of the state-rooms have swinging berths, which are intended to counteract the unpleasantness experience from the rolling and pitching of the vessel. ... There is a barber's shop and a nursery; and in the steerage an hospital is provided for emigrant passengers who may be ill during the voyage. The cooking for the whole ship is done by steam. ... The sailing qualities of the vessel were pronounced to be such as would render her one of the fastest and safest ocean steamer afloat (*ibid.*).



Sometime in 1895 the *Germanic* was rebuilt by the original builders, Harland & Wolff, which added an extra deck, more tonnage, and lengthened funnels. On 13 February 1899 the ship 'capsized at her New York berth because of to [sic] much ice on decks.'<sup>41</sup> Such immobile condition continued while the ship sank further into the mud. Finally, on 24 February the *New York Times* wrote this headline: 'The Germanic Floated: Wreckers Raise the White Star Line, Sunk at Her Pier.'<sup>42</sup> On 18 March 1899 the same paper further informed that, 'The White Star Line steamer Germanic ... which arrived at Queenstown yesterday [March 16] from New York March 7, has arrived here to be overhauled after her experiences at New York, where she sank at her dock and remained partly under water for a number of days.'<sup>43</sup> And, as record has it, the *Germanic* resumed her transatlantic voyage from Liverpool on 7 June 1899.<sup>44</sup>

But to find out what finally happened to the great Liner we have an interesting episode in the steamship's history:

The largest American ocean line consolidation is the International Mercantile Marine Company. It is an American company but the bulk of the tonnage controlled by it is foreign. In 1902 it brought under one ownership and management five large transatlantic lines, whose aggregate fleet comprised 136 vessels, with a tonnage of 1,034,884. The lines brought together were the Leland [Leyland] Line, the White Star Line, the Red Star Line, the Atlantic Transport and the Dominion Line.<sup>45</sup>

But this effort later failed to achieve what it had aimed for, as the international *Time* magazine wrote in its issue of 19 January 1931: 'In 1902 the late great John Pierpont Morgan formed a shipping combine which was to make the US flag supreme on the seven seas. It was one of his

several great mistakes. At first he contemplated joining all foreign lines into one. Great service. Although he failed to do this, he purchased the famed British White Star Line for his new International Mercantile Marine Co.'<sup>46</sup>

The *Germanic*, as a White Star Line ship, ended her last voyage when she reached New York on 10 July 1903. Afterwards she was chartered by the American Lines and ran their Southampton-New York route. In 1905 she was sold to the Dominion Line; they renamed her *Ottawa*, and engaged her on their Liverpool-Quebec-Montreal route before she was sold to the Turkish Government in 1911. She was renamed as *Gul Djemal* and began carrying Turkish soldiers in the First World War. While on war duty, the *Gul Djemal* was torpedoed by the Allied submarine E-14 and sank in shallow waters—a great many of the 4,000 soldiers she had on board lost their lives. The ship was later raised, repaired, and reinstated in the war service, and in 1918 *Gul Djemal* was entrusted to carry 1,500 German soldiers to Dover, where they were disarmed and sent home.

When the war was over *Gul Djemal* went back to her passenger carrying service. It is learnt that, 'The Ottoman-America Line made four transatlantic passenger voyages in 1920–21 to New York from Constantinople and also made some calls at Varna, Constanza, and Odessa. They only operated one ship on this service "Gul Djemal" and she was the first Turkish passenger steamer to cross the North Atlantic. She was renamed Gulcemal in 1928.'<sup>48</sup> Most probably, this last change of name was due to its new route. Our guess is based on information that 'the ship was renamed as Gul Djemal in memory of and reverence to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V Reshad's mother HH Gülcemal Khadin Efendi (1826–1895) (ibid.).

The *Germanic*, concurrently with her

advancing age, had repeated brush with misfortune. On 19 January 1931 the *Time* magazine wrote:

The old White Star liner *Germanic* went ashore near Hora lighthouse in the Sea of Marmora and slowly began breaking up. Sad news was this to sea-loving oldsters who remembered her trim lines, her square-rigged sails and two funnels amidships when she was (in the 1870s) the finest transatlantic steamship. At that time she could cross from Queenstown to Manhattan in 7 days, 10 hr., 50 min. In 1895 she was equipped with new engines and driven the same distance in 6 days, 21 hr., 38 min. But when faster ships were built she was relegated to the Canadian emigrant service, rechristened the *Ottawa*. Later on, the Turkish navy bought her, used her in the World War, when she was torpedoed in the Dardanelles. Salvaged, she was made a Black Sea freighter, called the *Gulcemah* [*sic*], in which capacity she was serving when stranded last week.<sup>48</sup>

The indomitable vessel was salvaged from the Sea of Marmora and continued her service. For further news we had to wait till 1949, when she was found to be used as a storage ship. In 1950 the *Gulcemah* was converted into a floating hotel, but she had almost reached the end of her career. On 29 October 1950, after being afloat for 75 long years on the seas around the world, the once glorious *Germanic* was taken to Messina, Italy, for scrapping, which, when started, revealed the original White Star Line gold strip along her hull.

### **The Journey**

On reaching England

Vivekananda once again wrote to the Hale Sisters on 20 April 1896: 'Greetings to you from the other shore. The voyage has been pleasant and no sickness this time. I gave myself treatment to avoid it. I made quite a little run through Ireland and some of the Old English towns and now am once more in Reading. ... Nothing of importance happened on the way. It was dull, monotonous, and prosaic as my life. I love America more when I am out of it. And, after all, those years there have been some of the best I have yet seen.'<sup>49</sup>

As regards 'I made quite a little run through Ireland', Mrs Burke has added that: 'The ship touched at Queenstown, or Cobh, on the south coast of Ireland, and it would seem that Swamiji and Josiah J Goodwin there disembarked, "made quite a little run through Ireland", reboarded the *Germanic* at a port further north, and crossed the Irish Sea to Liverpool.'<sup>50</sup>

Apart from this, we hardly have further information on this particular voyage.

### **The Interlude**

Vivekananda stayed at Reading for slightly more than a week before moving to Miss Müller's

Queenstown Harbour, County Cork, Ireland (c.1890–1900; photomechanical print)



residence at Tower Lodge at Pinkney's Garden, Maidenhead, a municipal borough on the Thames, twelve miles northeast of Reading. By the end of the first week of May Swamiji went to a rented accommodation at 63 St George's Road and set in motion the second phase of his work in England. His classes began on 7 May 1896, followed by a series of three Sunday lectures—starting on 7 June 1896—in one of the three large art galleries on the upper floor of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours at 191 Piccadilly. But those apart, we have that 'the Swami's many classes, his six Sunday lectures, and his uncounted private interviews did not by any means cover the whole of the work he was doing in England. He lectured also in many drawing-rooms and at several well-known clubs.'<sup>51</sup> But the essential element in all he preached had undeniably the message that 'Vedanta teaches the basic philosophy of all religions; this philosophy is no monopoly of any particular religion. This is why Vedanta will become the universal religion; convert it into universal treasure. The Vedanta must not remain as the closed preserve of a group of narrow-minded people' (2.109).

On 19 July, following the end of his lecture session, the swami went on a holiday to a few places in Europe with his close friends and admirers. After around nine relaxing weeks he came back to England, on 17 September 1896, to resume his classes at 39 Victoria Street on 8 October. During this period he lived at 14 Greycoat Gardens, Westminster.

In the second week of November Vivekananda asked Mrs Sevier to purchase four tickets on the most convenient steamer leaving Naples for India. Accordingly, four berths were booked on a new steamer of the North German Lloyd, scheduled to leave Naples on 30 December for Ceylon. The swami's three companions were Mr

and Mrs Sevier and J J Goodwin. The swami preferred to sail from Naples so that his sea-voyage could be shortened and, presumably, en route he could see the famous places of Italy.

On 16 December Swamiji was waved off by several friends and admirers at the London Railway Station. Goodwin was expected to meet them at Naples. The party, after visiting places of interest on the way, finally boarded the steamer *Prinz Regent Luitpold*, which left Naples on 30 December 1896.

(To be continued)

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# ***An Enquiry into the Strength of Law***

**Prof. N L Mitra**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

## ***Judicial vs Tribunal Justice***

JUDICIAL FUNCTIONING through the Court of Law is an inherent quality of governance structure under the Common Law System that India inherited from the British rule. The early history of the British Common Law Courts was also confronted with the issue of delivery of justice. For about six decades Britain had two systems of courts: the Court of Law and the Court of Chancery. The Court of Chancery was involved where justice was to be sought beyond the Common Law competence. Ultimately, the Court of Chancery was abolished and the Court of Law was authorized to deliver justice if common law was unable to provide any, in which case the Court could apply common conscience to seek justice beyond common law practices. The Common Law System was introduced in British India in civil and criminal administration of justice. But most of the laws required for administration of civil justice, and all laws required for administration of criminal justice during the British rule, were codified like the Civil Law System of Europe. The procedures were also put into code: civil code for civil law and criminal code for criminal law. But the judicial system remained in the same British model. Indian courts took the liberty of importing common law and common law principles, with the high risk of systemic friction.

I will take a couple of instances to demonstrate this misfit, which is one of the serious causes of delay in justice. The first instance relates to tribunalization of justice with the

ostensible reason of quickening the justice delivery process. Unfortunately, in the controversy and in laying down erroneous concepts in the name of a tribunal much damage has been caused. Tribunalized justice is one of the fundamental characters of the Romano-Germanic Civil Law System. A Court confines itself to the parties named in the suit/case and proof for and against, and not to truth! Tribunals take the entire responsibility of tracking the truth by investigation and inquiry, which is followed by process service, and then arrives at a fact-based decision—not simply proof-based. Tribunals find the number of parties involved, enquires about every issue and against every person directly or indirectly related, and then based on truth gives the verdict. The Court, on the other hand, scrupulously restricts itself on proof and predetermined procedures. In a tribunal, since the investigator is also in the bench, there is clear accountability. In the British accusatorial jurisprudence the Court cannot have investigation, prosecution, and adjudication power, all in one. Courts remain only responsible for processual justice. The other important issue to be remembered is that at every stage of the justice delivery system, officers—including the judicial officers—go on rotating by way of transfer. This means that an investigation, as well as the proceedings of the case, may be handled by a chain of officers, one after another. This factor cuts deep into the efficiency of the judicial system.

Naturally, a tribunal system is unsuitable in the ILS. During the British rule two identified revenue areas were kept under tribunals: land revenue and taxation system. The former was under the Board of Revenue and the latter under the Tax Tribunals. The nature and function of these two tribunals was administrative in character, in order to provide quick administrative justice. Courts can give only litigative justice and cannot be a partner in distributive justice. The more we attempt to provide distributive justice through the Courts, the more we delay dispute resolution in litigation matters. Two essential characters of the tribunal system are: (i) it is a plural body with experts in law and domain knowledge, and (ii) there is a direct link between the decision and hands-on investigation.

Indian tribunals are predominantly structured with judges or judicial officers, with little or no place for knowledgeable persons in that particular domain. Judges in India are, through their grooming process early in professional life, deeply entrenched in the Civil Procedure Code. Hence, they cannot exercise liberty, even if provided, to choose a liberal and flexible procedure. If procedure is the only facility in tribunals, it has been already proved that the tribunal system is malfunctioning in India, except in Tax Tribunals. Tax Tribunals are composed of a judicial officer and a chartered accountant, or a senior revenue officer. The tribunal is an administrative body in which appeal lies against the order of the appellate commissioner—though the structure has a judicial character due to its having a judicial officer involved in the constitution. These tribunals track the truth through examination of transactions and not simply through accounting books. This is the reason why an appeal against the Tax Tribunal is filed in the High Court.

The jurisdiction of the High Court is ousted in constituting several financial tribunals such

as the Security Tribunal, the Competition Tribunal, the Technology Tribunal, the Corporate Tribunal, and so on. In all these tribunals the presiding officer is either a serving or retired High Court judge or a retired Supreme Court judge. The age of retirement is sixty-five in the case of the former, and sixty-seven in the case of the latter. This age concession is used to demolish the independent character of serving judges. As chairman of the Bankruptcy Committee I had the opportunity to present the case of the plea of the Committee for constituting one or more separate specialized and dedicated Benches for company matters in each High Court instead of constituting the Appellate Company Tribunal. The then law minister, however, was inclined towards the report of the Justice Eradi Committee, suggesting a tribunal by pointing to the standard of knowledge of the judges and to the delaying tactics of the professional—the minister was himself a highly reputed senior lawyer.

But the experience shows otherwise: dispute resolution would further be delayed in the tribunal. It was wonderful to note the full circle in the opinion of the same professional and political leader asserting his point on Justice Sen's 'impeachment proceedings'.<sup>25</sup> The Bankruptcy Committee Report of the Reserve Bank of India contained the same recommendation.<sup>26</sup> Judges have a sixth sense for obtaining the convincing proof, but cannot track or crack the truth. They do not, by nature of their training, have the required competence of enquiring and investigating authority. Naturally, tribunals function almost like a court, with the only difference that a judge of the court is in his preretirement age and a judge of a tribunal in his postretirement age.

Another transitional area in which there is a serious bottleneck is the commercial legal prescriptions and dispute resolution mechanism. The British rule was predominantly concerned with

the administration of the criminal justice and also of civil administration of commercial transactions entered into by civil society. The transactions were: transfer of property, wholesale and retail trading, and enforcement of negotiable instruments. One wonders why private transactions through contracts are not simply kept within the terms of the contract. Why don't Indian courts respect the principle of 'contract sovereign'? If one seeks justice in a contract situation on the grounds of coercion, undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation, or mistake, one can on these specific grounds agitate the issue soon after. Otherwise, why shall a court go on days together for private dispute resolution to unnecessarily discover any special ground of making any variation from the contractual terms? Considerable time would be saved in commercial dispute resolutions if the dispute resolution is strictly confined to contractual terms. In all contractual relations like commercial litigation, parties together lay down the rules in the contract, which they would abide by. Therefore, the court has to better settle the dispute within the context of contractual terms.

### ***Strength of Law Tested***

Two present issues can be taken up by way of example to examine the strength of law and justice: land acquisition and eradication of corruption. A controversy regarding land acquisition that is threatening to have a snowball effect has recently cropped up. It is argued that more than 60 per cent of the land in India is agricultural land and is owned by agricultural families and appropriate governments. Companies do require land for industries. Had there been a free land market, the corporate sector could have acquired land and met their requirements for industrial development. The problems are: (i) lack of organized land market, (ii) the buying of land leading to buying the litigation attached to it, (iii) inclusive

and backdated land records, (iv) ownership and family system in rural areas, (v) religious institutions, (vi) corruption in land management, (vii) non-conclusive finality in land transaction and land records, (viii) political hegemony, and, (ix) absence of land use mapping. As such, companies would require the state governments to facilitate land procurement and not make use of force to dislodge the farming community from the land. The principle of 'eminent domain' can be applied only in case the land is to be used by the state. In the last six decades there has been no land-planning and finalization of comprehensive land records. Hence, the issue of industry versus agriculture is a sham debate.

Soon after the establishment of constitutional governance in India, with independent judiciary and human rights in the Constitution of India, an adequate preparation for a new form of governance was necessary. Independent India inherited an executive and judicial system from the British. An immediate friction started between the executive and judicial processes, for there were unaltered laws codified during British rule and new form of constitutional governance not internalized. In the absence of a definite policy direction on land use, differences started between the administration and judiciary on land matters through catena of cases on land acquisition like Kameswar Singh,<sup>27</sup> Bela Banerjee,<sup>28</sup> et al. Ultimately, property rights had to be taken out of the fundamental rights chapter. But the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 remained in the statute book unamended and unaltered. In an imperial form of governance the two basic powers of the state, police power and power of 'eminent domain', were designed on a top-down model, absolutely in the interests of the imperial power. The constitutional governance of independent India completely changed the objective of these two state powers by accepting the right to property as a fundamental





right of citizens and by subjecting police power to human rights jurisprudence, as clearly enunciated in the fundamental rights of the people in India. The interpretative focus had changed from state dominated interest to a people-centric objective.

But the style of governance, inherited from the British, remained unaltered. There was no mechanism designed for such change. The general principle of estate acquisition is based on 'eminent domain'. It means the absolute power of acquisition and requisition of any property for the use of the state in discharging sovereign functions.

Though the contour of sovereign function has been radically changed, the acquisition of land for the purpose of the state remained unchanged. The other two purposes that the British intended for widening the scope of land acquisition were for public interest and for the use of companies. The law having remained unchanged, the policy of 'land to the tillers' was declared as the land policy of the National Congress, thus requiring different policy and tools of interpretation from the point of view of executive as well as judicial functioning of the state machinery. Unfortunately, no

thought was given on the constitutional demand. Under British rule the purpose was strictly to be construed as mandatory and compulsory. In the changed form of constitutional governance in free India the other two purposes—for public interest and for use of companies—were to remain, while the state would have a neutral facilitator's job.

'Public interest' is undefined. There has to be a comprehensive definition of the term for the purpose of land acquisition. Public interest can be established for using the subterranean resources, infrastructure development like public highways and roads, establishment of ports and harbours, public utilities such as hospitals, supply of municipal services, and so on. Here too the state has to play a facilitator's job instead of compulsorily imposing a notice of land acquisition. Unfortunately, the role of a state as facilitator has never been highlighted, nor the methods predetermined. A company would require facilitation for the following reasons:

(i) Indian land records are not only incomplete, faulty, and questionable but also uncertain and inconclusive. Hence, land is subject to high litigation. A company does not want to buy litigation after paying the market price for the land. Only land acquired by the state can become free of any litigation in the hands of a company.

(ii) Companies may not mind buying land directly from the owners, but land has many intermediary interest-holders. Companies are unable to settle the interests of the intermediaries without state help and assistance.

(iii) An industry would need land in a single plot, but land may be sold by owners piecemeal, because of subdivision and fragmentation of holdings. To make land available in a single plot, political consultation and assistance is required.

(iv) If an open deal is not monitored, an extra payment added to the basic rate will have to be paid as premium later. In many cases this premium

can be quite high. Only through state assistance can such a situation of uncertainty be avoided.

(v) There are different regulatory systems for land transfer of agricultural land, including the restriction imposed on transfer of agricultural land for non-agricultural purpose and land in-alienation.

One may notice that land acquisition is for the use of the company, not for the establishment of an industry, factory, or a workshop. Under the Companies Act agriculturists can now also form companies. If such producer companies ask for land from 'land acquisition', what would the state do? Use of land for generating agricultural goods can be understood to be a public service.

Land is required to be administered by state governments. So, why not give state governments the complete right to determine under what circumstances and for what purpose they would facilitate the sale of land?

Therefore, unless there is state assistance and facilitation extended to a company, it would be difficult for a company to acquire land. But it goes without saying that a state dominated mandatory method of estate acquisition cannot stand democratic rationality. This is the reason why a land dispute in the court does not get resolved quickly. The law of 1894 is awfully outdated, and the role of the state is not well defined in so far as the land administration is concerned. And there is no reason for using force through the exercise of 'eminent domain'. Besides, the deep dissatisfaction of the farming community makes land laws too slow and land transfer highly corruptive.


The second issue of eradication of corruption is really complex. People do not understand why and how the old Official Secrets Act, 1923, and the modern Right to Information Act, 2005, can coexist. The former makes governance opaque and the latter transparent! The seed of corruption was sown during the British rule when it

combined the policy-making political-executive with the implementation-executive function. Black money now drives honest money out of circulation. The system has become so rotten that even ordinary people now want to fight corruption with a most powerful *jana lokpal*, ombudsman. They also know for certain that if the *lokpal* and his office become corrupt, who will be the *lokpal* of the *lokpal*?

The position is so desperate that there is an emergency situation. If the prime minister of a country cannot be believed, which officer of the state can be believed? If in a liberal democracy the democratic process of the political system is corrupted, the country becomes unsafe. The thought that government agencies can be managed or approached with a premium for faster clearing of files is itself very stinky. The situation gets out of hand when at the highest level things can be managed with black money. Accumulation of power, even in the hands of the elected leaders, is always bad and creates an environment conducive to corruption.

### Epilogue

Spiritually speaking, we move from darkness to light, from untruth to truth, and from death to immortality. We have been dwelling on law as well as its applications and ramifications, but it must be remembered that the action of law affects only the grossest part of a human being. Laws are necessary to remove the unnecessary strife and competition, to make life sane and safe, besides giving everybody a chance to rise up. For if laws were removed, human society would go back to its brutal past. The goal of every person is not just to be good and law-abiding but to rise above all laws. This is done not by breaking them but by transcending them. We have to be spiritual 'outlaws', in the words of Swami Vivekananda. A person has other higher

dimensions, like the *manomaya kosha*, mental sheath, and the *vijñanamaya kosha*, intelligence sheath. Deep within lies the Atman, which is infinite and beyond all laws. The journey to infinity starts from the grossest part of the personality—the *annamaya kosha*, food sheath, and the *pranamaya kosha*, vital energy sheath—which are bound by laws. As we travel towards the light of the Atman, into the higher dimensions of our existence, the more we shall feel freedom and bliss. This journey takes us from selfishness to varying degrees of unselfishness, and this is real human growth. This expansion of the self is the expansion of consciousness and the discovery of our true infinite immortal nature. This journey, apart from leading us to our real nature, also gives law its *raison d'être*, main reason for existence, which is different from *raison d'état*, purely political reasons. 

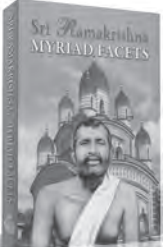
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26. The main report established the logic as to why a dedicated Bench in the High Court is better than a tribunal. See 'Mitra Committee Report', *Advisory Group on Bankruptcy Law*, 2 vols (New Delhi: RBI, 2001).
27. *State of Bihar v. Maharajadhiraj Sir Kameswar Singh* [1952] 1 SCR 889. In this case the whole law relating to acquisition of estates was challenged, but certain provisions of the law were challenged as colourable legislation or as fraud on the Constitution.
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# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## **Sri Ramakrishna: Myriad Facets**

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of  
Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029.  
Website: [www.sriramakrishna.org](http://www.sriramakrishna.org).  
2011. 429 pp. ₹ 150.

The mighty Himalayas seen from different angles are a source of perennial delight as they present diverse and sublime views. Sri Ramakrishna's personality is, likewise, the spiritual Himalayas in today's religious landscape. This unique phenomenon excites endless veneration, wonder, and curiosity among philosophers, religionists, academicians, sociologists, and also common people burdened and burned by life's travails. Sri Ramakrishna's appeal and fascination show no sign of diminishing, and today's zeitgeist is remarkably enhancing them. The more scholastics study about and grapple with the Ramakrishna phenomenon, the more they find it challenging, deep, and significant, for Sri Ramakrishna was the infinite sporting under the cloak of the finite.

The book is an excellent anthology of illuminating essays embodying the insightful thoughts of perspicacious monks and profound scholars. Published to commemorate the 175th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna it is, to borrow the felicitous words of Dr S Radhakrishnan, 'a homage that finite minds pay to the inexhaustibility of the Infinite'.

The essays, originally published in the *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, offer arresting glimpses of the multidimensional profile of the Master. The myriad facets of Sri Ramakrishna's unfathomable personality peep through the lucid and forceful essays and give us a glimpse of the profound spiritual stuff this disarmingly simple person is made of. The spotlight dwells on: the essential truth of all religions; absurdity of interreligious strife; validity of *nirguna* and *saguna* Brahman; the supreme bliss of

*aparoksha anubhuti*, plenary experience; efficacy of diverse moods and sadhanas for realizing God; transcendence and immanence of the Divine; the validity of selfless service as a logical corollary of the doctrine of divine omnipresence; blending of the four yogas in spiritual life; and truth and rationale of avatars.

As one reads *Sri Ramakrishna: Myriad Facets* a constantly changing pattern of brilliant aspects of an avatara become indelibly imprinted on the mind. However, some essays also remind us that the high altitude of Sri Ramakrishna's mysticism could not smother his human virtues and interests, besides his marvellous literary and aesthetic gifts, flair for telling stories, and sparkling moods of fun and frolic. In Sri Ramakrishna paradoxes like simplicity and profundity, rustic illiteracy and rarefied wisdom, marital status and monkish self-denial, childlike simplicity and solemn spiritual absorption are resolved—these are the themes of a few essays. Evidently, Sri Ramakrishna came to set up an ideal for everyone, and his teachings are an antidote for the ills afflicting modern society. He emphasized the importance of God realization as the goal of human life against discursive knowledge. Sri Ramakrishna's overarching spiritual *weltanschauung* and pure life were directed towards compassion for humanity.

The anthology spans wide areas of creative thought on Sri Ramakrishna and vouchsafes an authentic and original pen-portrait of the sage. The essays are marked by felicity of diction, fecundity of thought, and finality of conviction. Yet, we cannot help feeling that for all its scale and dexterous analysis, the essays have touched only the tip of the iceberg. For who can ever hope to fathom the *aprameyam*, immeasurable, define the *anirdeshyam*, indefinable, and describe the *anirvachaniyam*, unspeakable?

N Hariharan  
Madurai



## **A Study of Buddhist Medicine and Surgery in Gandhara**

Nasim H Naqvi

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 100 007. Website: [www.mldb.com](http://www.mldb.com). 2011. xx + 213 pp. ₹ 495.

Dr Nasim H Naqvi brings a refreshing honesty in the preface by stating his rationale for writing this book: 'It is a subject no one has ever treated before; an obvious fact when one starts searching relevant data in the literature of history of medicine regarding the medical achievements of the Buddhists in Gandhara.' Dr Naqvi had his schooling near Taxila, thus his natural love and curiosity for the locale and the surgical instruments exhibited in the Taxila Museum. He acknowledges 'being an anaesthetist (anaesthesiologist) for 40 odd years and watching surgical procedures closely' (xviii). It is this passion and erudition that the author reveals in this book, which is peppered with till now unavailable illustrations. He is a retired director of anaesthesia and intensive care services in the UK.

Besides passion and erudition there is diligence, because while researching the subject he visited many museums in Pakistan, corresponded with museums in India, and also visited museums in Greece. One also needs deep archaeological knowledge to distinguish between surgical instruments and those which only appear to be so. For example, he has a photo of a terracotta statue showing a dissected abdomen from the collection of the Allahabad Museum, dated between the third and the fourth century CE, and his academic acumen is reflected in the caption, which reads: 'This ritual implement has been wrongly included among surgical instruments' (143). Dr Naqvi should be congratulated for combining contemporary knowledge of medicine with such an arcane area as Buddhist medicine and surgery.

Cyrus the Great (590–29 BCE) had built an empire that stretched from Greece to the Indus River, and there was a lot of exchange in medical discourse during that time in Taxila. Dr Naqvi brings this exchange in the forefront in the first two chapters 'A Brief History of Gandhara' and

'Archaeological Sites of Taxila'. Contrary to present beliefs, medical persons of ancient Gandhara did not know of Hippocrates, Herophilus, or even the Roman surgeons Celsus or Galen, who were contemporaries. The author also locates the first written history of India in the writings of the ambassador of Selucus Nicator I (358–281 BCE), Megasthenes (350–290 BCE), who had 'great interest in medicine' and wrote the *Indica*. Dr Naqvi points out that in spite of these robust exchanges between the Greeks and the Indians there was no concept of the now ubiquitous 'examination of the pulse or physiology of circulation' (26). These observations go to show the depth of knowledge and concern for scholarly minutiae that is brought to the subject.

The chapter on 'Gandhara and the Medical Compendiums' deserves special mention, along with the one on 'Pharmaceutical Objects'. The author does a brilliant job at compiling various ancient texts on medicine in South East Asia and locating them within the Greco-Persian and Sanskrit corpus. For example, he proves the lineage of the Buddhist Vagbhata and then discusses the latter's work *Ashtangasangraha* (111). Through Dr Naqvi's meticulous research and flawless logic we can see that *Ashtangasangraha* is a canonical Buddhist medical literature. The book is replete with pictures of surgical instruments and objects used during the period under consideration. Medicine is not a theoretical science; it is ultimately clinical, and thus essentially practical. In the last chapter 'Surgical Instruments in the Taxila Museum', among other things, we have such medical arcana dealing with hooks to remove dead fetuses (202) and how Greco-Roman medics compared with the ancient Taxila medical fraternity (203). Without these pictures the book would have been incomplete. Dr Naqvi embodies an ideal of cosmopolitanism by taking an interest in Buddhism, ancient medicine, and history.

There is an excellent index at the end and plenty of footnotes, but the absence of a bibliography mars the otherwise perfect book.

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# REPORTS



*Main staircase leading to the Fullerton Hall at the Art Institute, Chicago, with Swami Vivekananda's first speech in 1893*

## **Commemoration of the 175th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna**

The following centres celebrated the 175th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. **Bhopal:** a four-day lecture series on 'Sri Rama and Sri Ramakrishna' from 4 to 7 December 2011; **Chengalpattu:** procession, speeches, and cultural programmes at Puriyampakkam village on 28 December; **Ghatshila:** Lilagiti (musical narration), public meeting, and film show from 28 to 30 December; **Manasadvip:** devotees' convention on 29 December in which about 500 devotees participated; **Rajkot:** cultural competitions from 9 to 23 December in which nearly 7,000 students of 100 schools participated; **Bengaluru:** drama, folk dances, Sanskrit Ashtavadhana (eightfold concentration) from 1 to 11 January 2012, around 1,500 people on an average attended the programmes each day; **Baranagar Mission:** a nine-day 'Sri Ramakrishna Mela' from 5 to 13 January; **Coimbatore Mission:** devotional singing, cultural programmes, exhibition, and public meeting on 1 January; altogether about one lakh people attended the programmes; **Hyderabad:** release of two video DVDs on Kamarpukur-Jayrambati and on Sri Ramakrishna Aratrikam (with meaning); **Lucknow:** 'Interfaith Goodwill Meet' on 1 January; **Narendrapur:** procession, a 'Ramakrishna Mela', exhibitions, interfaith dialogue, seminars, devotees' convention, and cultural programmes from 17 to 22 January; **Raipur:** public meeting at

Bhilai on 2 January, which was attended by about 100 devotees; **Saradapitha** (Belur): an international seminar on the theme 'Sri Ramakrishna's Ideas and Our Times' organized by Vidyamandira (Arts and Science College, under Saradapitha) from 19 to 21 January, in which several scholars of international repute participated and Swami Prabhānanda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered the keynote address; **Visakhapatnam:** spiritual retreat on 1 January in which about 400 devotees took part.

## **Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda**

On 28 January Sri Pranab Mukherjee, Finance Minister, Government of India, unveiled a Vivekananda Memorial Plaque with Swamiji's embossed image on it in the Art Institute of Chicago, USA. He also signed an agreement under which the University of Chicago will establish 'The Indian Ministry of Culture Vivekananda Chair' to honour the life and legacy of Swami Vivekananda by promoting fields of study most relevant to his teachings. More details are available at <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=79945>>.

Centres in Karnataka organized Swami Vivekananda Jyoti Yatra from 1 to 30 January. Ten vehicles were used to cover 4,000 km. Almost all the districts of Karnataka were covered





*Swami Vivekananda Jyoti Yatra, Karnataka*

to spread the message of Swami Vivekananda to the youth in particular and to the masses in general. During the yatra, 20 *satsangs* (spiritual discourses) and 38 youth conventions covering one lakh students were conducted, and an exhibition on Swamiji's life and teachings was held at all important places. <svjyotiyatra.blogspot.com> furnishes more details on the yatra.

### **National Youth Day Celebrations**

The National Youth Day (12 January) was celebrated with great enthusiasm and in an impressive way through various programmes such as processions, speeches, recitations, and cultural competitions. The following centres and the Headquarters, along with Saradapitha, celebrated the day: Aalo, Agartala, Allahabad, Asansol, Aurangabad, Bagh-bazar, Bengaluru, Baranagar Math, Baranagar Mission, Belgaum, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chapra, Chengalpattu, Chennai Students' Home, Coimbatore Math, Coimbatore Mission, Cooch Behar, Dehradun (Kishanpur), Delhi, Deoghar, Gadadhar Ashrama, Garbeta, Hyderabad, Jalpaiguri, Jammu, Jayrambati, Kadapa, Kalady, Kanchipuram, Kankurgachhi, Kanpur, Kochi, Limbdi, Madurai, Malda, Manasadwip, Mangalore, Midnapore, Mumbai, Muzaffarpur, Nagpur, Narainpur, Ponnampet, Port Blair, Pune, Puri Mission, Raipur, Rajkot, Ranchi Morabadi, Ranchi Sanatorium, Sargachhi, Sarisha, Shillong, Sikra-Kulingram, Swamiji's House, Tiruvalla,

Thiruvananthapuram, Vadodara, Vijayawada, and Visakhapatnam.

**Chennai Math** organized cultural competitions on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda, in which about 140,000 students from 1,200 educational institutions participated. On 12 January, prizes were given to the winners in a meeting attended by about 1,500 persons.

### **News from Branch Centres**

The newly constructed building at **Ramakrishna Math, Kanchipuram**, which houses office, bookstall, and library, was inaugurated on 14 December 2011.

**Ramakrishna Math, Chennai**, has brought out the digitized archive of *Brahmavadin*, the first journal of the Ramakrishna Order started from Chennai under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda. The archive containing all the issues of the journal, published between 1895 and 1914, was released on 18 December.

**Ramakrishna Mission, Vadodara**, felicitated 60 gold medallists of Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara, on 18 December in the presence of several dignitaries. Besides, Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, declared open the audio-visual section of the public library of the centre on 25 December.

On the initiative of **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, Khetri**, a



committee of prominent persons of the town decided to celebrate every year, starting from 2011, the historical day of Swami Vivekananda's reaching Khetri on his return from America in 1897, on 12 December, as *Khetri Virasat Divas* (Khetri Inheritance Day). Accordingly, on 12 December the committee organized various programmes in the town. In the morning about 1,000 school children marched through the town in a colourful procession. In the afternoon a live tableau of Raja Ajit Singh bringing Swamiji in a horse carriage was positioned in a huge procession. The prominent spots of the town were illumined and people lit candles in their houses and shops. Some memorable events during Swamiji's stay in Khetri were enacted in front of a gathering of about 3,000 people.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj inaugurated the newly built monks' quarters at **Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi**, on 28 December.

**Ramakrishna Math, Chennai**, launched India's first stereoscopic 3D animated movie on Swami Vivekananda and first 3D holographic display on lectures of Swamiji at Vivekanandar Illam (Vivekananda House), Chennai, on 12 January 2012.

At **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Salem**, a bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda was installed and the renovated bookstall was inaugurated on 12 January.

Sri Manik Sarkar, chief minister of Tripura, inaugurated on 12 January four newly constructed buildings to be used for medical service centre, students' home, kitchen and dining room, and library and reading room at the Dhaleswar sub-centre of **Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar**.

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Baranagar**, organized the first phase of its centenary celebration during December 2011. On 12 January 2012 Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj unveiled the newly installed life-size fibreglass statue of Swamiji at the ashrama. Besides, public meetings, a youth convention, a devotees' convention, a teachers' convention, and cultural programmes were also held by the centre.

On the occasion of Gangasagar Mela, **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Manasadwip**, organized a camp at the Mela area from 11 to 17 January in which free board and lodging were provided to 1,550 pilgrims and free meals were served to about 900 non-resident pilgrims. Besides, discourses and devotional singing were also arranged in the camp.

**Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady**, organized the concluding phase of the platinum jubilee celebrations of the ashrama and its schools on 24 and 25 January. Justice Kurian Joseph, chief justice of Himachal Pradesh, was the chief guest on the concluding day. About 4,000 persons attended the programme.

*Live tableau of Raja Ajit Singh bringing Swami Vivekananda in a horse carriage, Khetri*



Swami Prabhananda laid the foundation stone for the proposed hostel at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi (Morabadi)**, on 25 January.

The school at **Ramakrishna Mission, Kamarpukur**, celebrated its golden jubilee during the last year by holding various events such as discourses, exhibition, sports meet, cycle rally, procession, and cultural programmes. Besides, some additional facilities like online education in collaboration with Vivekananda University, spoken English laboratory, and computerized library were started in the school. The year-long celebrations concluded with a public meeting on 26 January.

The newly constructed building at **Ramakrishna Mission, Sikra-Kulingram**, to be used for office, computer training centre, and monks' quarters was inaugurated on 25 January.

**Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow**, provided Vitamin A capsules to 828 underprivileged children of two schools each in Lucknow and Sitapur districts and free glasses to 42 children with refractory errors during January.

### Achievements

In the international tournament 2011 for sport-persons under 24, held in Malaysia under the International Olympic Federation, two students of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai**, won gold medals: G C Gowtham in swimming and Mohammed Asraf in tennis.

### Relief

**Cyclone Relief** • **Chennai Math** served cooked food to 2,800 victims of the devastating cyclone 'Thane' on 30 December 2011, the day on which it struck north coastal Tamil Nadu.

**Flood Relief** • Continuing its flood relief operations, **Bhubaneswar** centre distributed 425 sets of study material (each set containing 1 school bag, 1 notebook, 1 pen, 1 pencil, 1 scale, and 1 value

education book) among 425 needy students belonging to flood-affected families in Tigiria block of Cuttack district from 18 to 20 January. In the wake of recent floods in Nadi (Fiji), **Nadi** centre started primary relief work by distributing cooked food among the affected families.

**Fire Relief** • **Gol Park** centre served cooked food (khichuri) and distributed 150 blankets, 100 saris, 150 lungis, 77 vests, 12 sets of children garments, 10 sweaters, and other items among 83 families whose huts had been gutted by a devastating fire in Kalikapur area, near E M Bypass, Kolkata.

**Distress Relief** • The following centres distributed various items to needy people: **Baranagar Mission**: 250 saris; **Cherrapunjee**: 501 saris; **Ghatshila**: 175 mosquito nets; **Ichapur**: 45 pants and 716 sets of children garments; **Jamshedpur**: 4,000 kg rice, 800 kg dal, 400 l edible oil; **Jayrambati**: 2,500 saris; **Koalpara**: 900 saris; **Medinipur**: 100 saris and 35 dhotis; **Rahara**: 150 saris, 199 mosquito nets, 196 frocks, 100 pants, 100 shirts, 2 sets of school uniforms, 2 school bags, 300 bars of bathing soap, 55 l coconut oil, 30 kg baby food, 12 cycle rickshaws, 12 sewing machines, and 15 bicycles; **Ranchi Sanatorium**: 2,000 bed sheets; **Sargachhi**: 50 mosquito nets; and in **Faridpur**, Bangladesh: 130 vests and stationery items to needy students.

**Winter Relief** • 21,373 blankets were distributed through the following centres to needy people: **Aalo**, 500; **Baghbazar**, 880; **Bankura**, 250; **Barasat**, 250; **Bhubaneswar**, 502; **Chandigarh**, 250; **Chandipur**, 250; **Cherrapunjee**, 2,100; **Coimbatore Mission**, 350; **Cooch Behar**, 270; **Delhi**, 847; **Deoghar**, 1,000; **Ghatshila**, 250; **Ichapur**, 2,000; **Jamshedpur**, 410; **Jayrambati**, 1,500; **Karimganj**, 300; **Khetri**, 39; **Koalpara**, 400; **Limbdi**, 250; **Malda**, 250; **Manasadwip**, 250; **Medinipur**, 500; **Muzaffarpur**, 250; **Puri Math**, 500; **Purulia**, 250; **Rahara**, 420; **Ranchi Morabadi**, 254; **Ranchi Sanatorium**, 270; **Shyamla Tal**, 247; **Silchar**, 3,534; **Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House**, 2,000; and in **Faridpur**, Bangladesh, 50. Besides, **Baghbazar** and **Rahara** centres distributed respectively 610 and 150 warm chadars to needy people.

